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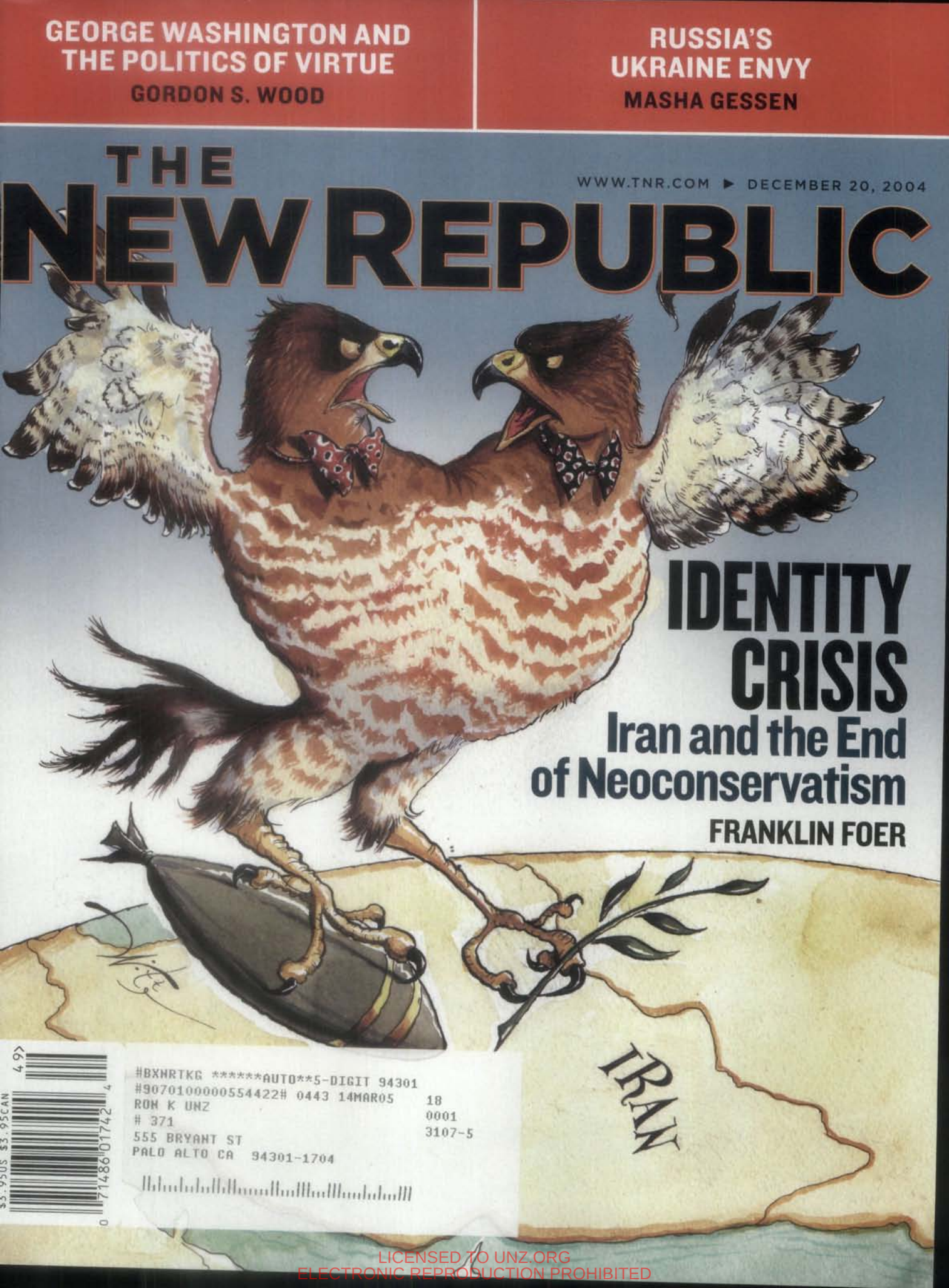

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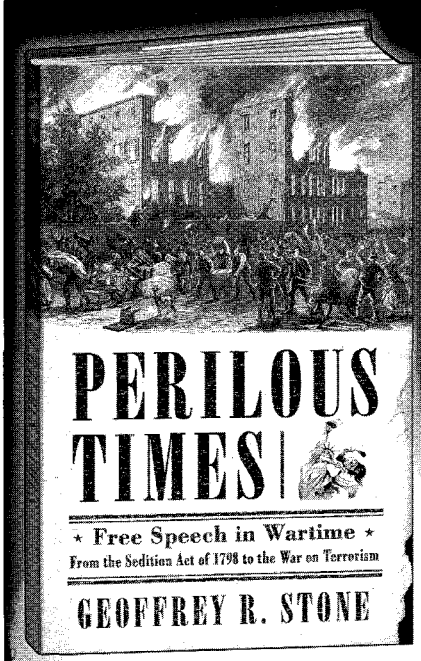

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CORRESPONDENCE

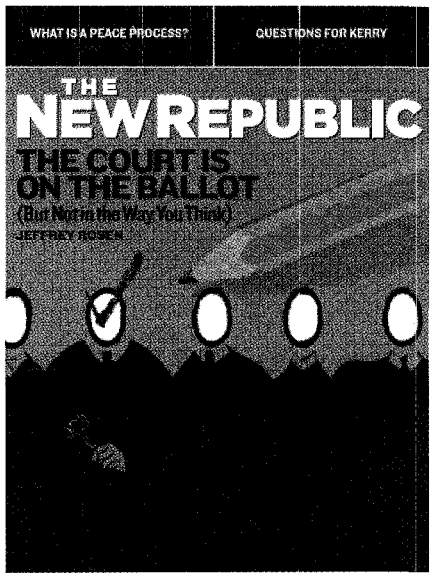
RIGHT BACK

JEFFREY ROSEN'S ARTICLE IS VERY well done, but, since it was written before the election results showed the power of the religious right, would he now revise his prognostication ("Supreme Mistake," November 8)? After all, the White House may now have a strong political incentive to nominate anti–*Roe* v. *Wade* judges—maybe not immediately, but, say, before the next congressional election, when a new fight over *Roe* would help solidify President Bush's extreme right, which no longer looks as far-out politically as before. Even to discredit it, the "moral values" issue needs deeper exploration by examining the internal contradictions in the concept.

ROBERT A. SENSER
Editor
HUMAN RIGHTS FOR WORKERS
Reston, Virginia

BAD EDUCATION

JOHN B JUDIS, RUY TEIXEIRA, AND Marisa Katz find profound significance in the supposed fact that Bush and John Kerry drew voters equally from those who had college degrees, while Bush supposedly trounced Kerry among voters who started but did not finish college ("30 Years' War," November 15). But the statistics published by *The New York Times* on November 7 show no such thing. According to the *Times*, there was almost no difference between the preferences of those who finished college and those who started but did not finish, and this held true in 2000 as well as in 2004. According to the *Times*, Kerry was favored by those who never finished high school and by those with graduate degrees, while all of the voters who were in between these educational extremes slightly favored Bush. Moreover, the *Times* data showed that the percentages voting for Bush increased in tandem with income, which is much more compatible with the *Times*' figures for voting as correlated with educational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QUESTIONS FOR KERRY
THE NEW REPUBLIC
THE COURT IS ON THE BALLOT
(But Not in the Way You Think)
JEFFREY ROSEN

background than with the figures relied on by Judis, Teixeira, and Katz.

RICHARD JOFFE
New York, New York

JOHN B. JUDIS, RUY TEIXEIRA, AND MARISA KATZ RESPOND:
Richard Joffe misreads our article. We relied on the same data, from Edison Mitofsky Research, as the *Times* did. In the final exit poll tally, Bush won among *all* voters without college degrees by 53 to 47 percent, as we cited, and split college graduates. We didn't cite a figure for voters with some college but no degree, though Bush won these voters by 54 to 46 percent, up three percent from 2000. Bush's success among the non-college-educated white voters was the prime reason for his victory in 2004.

ELEMENTARY SCIENCE

JUDGE RICHARD A. POSNER CHARGES that Sherlock Holmes was not a scientific detective, lacked forensic competence, did not study the "criminal class" (do we still speak that way, judge?), and made little use of scientific instrumentation ("CSI: Baker Street," October 11). These assertions are all false. Counter-

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examples are manifold in the stories, though Posner tells us he has "only a faint recollection of stories read a half-century ago." When we first meet Holmes in "A Study in Scarlet," he is studying how bruises may still be induced on a body long after death. He has also just invented a new, and highly sensitive, test for the presence of blood, which will replace the guaiac method. We later learn that he has made a special study of cigar ash, of the telltale signs of a person's occupation on his hands, of handwriting, of footprints, et cetera. Not bad for 1887, but Posner actually thinks Sherlock ought to be studying DNA. And Holmes maintained extensive notebooks in which biographies of criminals as well as pillars of society were near at hand. Indeed, Watson tells us that Holmes was familiar with the details of a half-century of crime. Holmes employs the microscope as well as the magnifying glass, and his mastery of analytical chemistry is essential in several cases.

Posner also asserts that the scientific method works by "confronting hypotheses with objective ... data that may falsify them." Holmes tells us that he never theorizes in advance of the facts because in that way one might twist facts to fit the theory rather than fitting the theory to the facts. As a practicing scientist, I find that I often work in the same way. It is the fluid interplay between observation and theory that makes for effective science. When Holmes reasons that the dog's nighttime silence in "The Hound of the Baskervilles" indicates that the criminal was known to the animal (i.e., it was an inside job), he illustrates the close kinship between observation and deduction. When he notes that only one of Sir Henry Baskerville's boots was stolen (an old one, not a new one), we understand that the hound of the Baskervilles is a flesh and blood creature, not a specter.

And, finally, the judge fails to understand the enduring appeal of these stories. As Edgar Smith noted, "For it is not Sherlock Holmes who sits in Baker Street, comfortable, competent and self-assured; it is we ourselves who are there, full of a tremendous capacity for wisdom, complacent in the presence of our humble Watson, conscious of a warm well-being and a timeless, imperishable content. ... It is we who hear the pounding on the stairs and the knock upon the door. The swirling fog without and the acrid smoke within bite deep indeed, for we taste them even now."

I hope that Posner brings to the bench a more open mind and a greater capacity for whimsy than he brings to literary criticism.

ROBERT A. MOSS
Professor of Chemistry
Rutgers University
Investitured Member
The Baker Street Irregulars
Metuchen, New Jersey

RICHARD A. POSNER RESPONDS:

De gustibus non est disputandum. But there is a mistake in Robert A. Moss's letter that is worth noting. Moss may not explicitly theorize whenever he examines data, but he is surely not a tabula rasa. What he notices in chemical data is shaped by his knowledge of chemistry. If he and I examined the same body of chemical data, we would see very different things because of very different theoretical presuppositions. ■

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The Good Fight

TRB FROM WASHINGTON

LAST WEEK, I WROTE A COVER story in THE NEW REPUBLIC arguing that the struggle against Islamist totalitarianism should define contemporary liberalism, as the struggle against Soviet totalitarianism defined liberalism during the early cold war ("A Fighting Faith," December 13). This week, I waded through responses—some supportive, some critical, some both. The most surprising came from Kevin Drum, who writes the blog *Political Animal* at washingtonmonthly.com. Drum said I never proved my key point—that I never explained *why* totalitarian Islam is so grave a threat that liberals should make it central to their worldview. He urged me to write another article, a "prequel."

In a way, the response confirmed my theory: that many contemporary liberals, including many smart ones, don't see defeating Al Qaeda as a paramount national challenge. And that's a political problem, since most Americans do. Throughout 2004, Americans consistently named terrorism as one of their top concerns and generally felt that President Bush could handle it better than John Kerry. And even those polls, I suspect, understate terrorism's political resonance—since, in both 2002 and 2004, roughly as many voters cited domestic issues, such as the economy, where Democrats enjoyed a big lead. And yet, in both elections, Republicans exceeded expectations.

But just because many Americans consider Al Qaeda a grave threat doesn't mean it is. Drum argues that, "compared to fascism and communism, Islamic totalitarianism seems like pretty thin beer to many. It's not fundamentally expansionist, and its power to kill people isn't even remotely in the same league."

There are lots of problems with this statement. For starters, you don't have to believe Al Qaeda is as grave a threat as the USSR to believe it is the greatest threat to U.S. security and liberal values *today*. In 1954, segregation was probably the greatest domestic threat to liberal values. But that doesn't mean it was as great a threat as slavery.

If Islamist totalitarianism is less of a threat than Soviet totalitarianism, however, it is far graver than Drum suggests. To say that Al Qaeda's ideology is "not fundamentally expansionist" is wrong. It is true that, unlike communism, which aspired to guide every nation on Earth, totalitarian Islam only recommends itself to the Middle East. But, in Al Qaeda's definition, the Middle East includes every country with a substantial Muslim population or once under Muslim rule. In other words, it extends from Southeast Asia to Europe. In the mid-'90s, Al Qaeda went to war in Bosnia. In February 2003, Osama bin Laden cited Pakistan and Nigeria as ripe for Islamist takeover—although both are far from the Arab world, and Nigeria is only 50 percent Muslim. As University of Michigan professor and *Informed Comment* blogger Juan Cole has pointed out, bin Laden envisions a unified Muslim state, ruled, as it was in the heyday of Islamic power, by a caliphate. And, as bin Laden pointedly reminded listeners early this year, that caliphate includes "Al Andalus"—Spain.

Is Al Qaeda likely to take power in all the places bin Laden desires? Of course not. But it could do far less and still send the United States into deep crisis. By many accounts, Al Qaeda has long enjoyed substantial support in the Pakistani security services. Were Islamist fanatics to assassinate Pervez Musharraf and ally themselves with the general who succeeded him—in an echo of the military-Islamist alliance that ruled Sudan from 1989 to 1999—Al Qaeda would be within striking distance of a nuclear bomb. Or take Saudi Arabia, where bin Laden is wildly popular. If bin Laden, or his local associates, took control of the Saudi oil supply, the U.S. economy would plunge into depression.

But, even if Al Qaeda never seizes a single government, it still poses a grave threat. By suggesting that Islamist totalitarianism is "thin beer" because, unlike Soviet totalitarianism, it doesn't control states, Drum ironically echoes the neocons, who are so mired in a cold war mindset that they can't grasp terrorism except as an extension of state power.

Drum suggests that Al Qaeda's "power to kill people isn't even remotely in the same league" as the USSR's. But, if you're talking about killing *Americans*—which Drum is—the fact that Al Qaeda controls no territory makes it more dangerous, as well as less. Yes, the USSR, with its massive nuclear arsenal, had the power to kill more Americans. But, as a government interested in self-preservation, it was also deterred by the threat of U.S. retaliation. And that threat made the USSR cautious about taking American lives.

As September 11 showed, Osama bin Laden is not cautious. The prospect of U.S. retaliation does not faze him—in fact, he welcomes it in the hope that it will spawn more Muslim anger and more recruits.

So, while bin Laden's capacity to kill Americans is clearly inferior to the USSR's, for Al Qaeda—unlike the Kremlin—*capacity is the only limiting factor*. And the spread of technical knowledge and materials makes the destructive capacity of a small terrorist band far greater than it was even a few years ago. This February, then–CIA Director George Tenet noted that Al Qaeda documents discussed how to assemble and use a chemical weapon or a dirty bomb. According to the 9/11 Commission, Al Qaeda has been trying to acquire a nuclear device for ten years—with the United States "a prime target." No one knows how close they are. But, in his book *Imperial Hubris*, Michael Scheuer, former chief of the CIA's bin Laden unit, writes, "No one should be surprised when bin Laden and Al Qaeda detonate a weapon of mass destruction in the United States."

If Scheuer's prediction comes true, the consequences for individual rights will be terrifying. Which is to say this: The fight for national security *is* the fight for liberal values, not merely in the Muslim world, where fanaticism has already blighted countless lives, but also at home, where threats to American safety almost inevitably spawn threats to American freedom. Totalitarian Islam has already damaged both, and unless defeated, the damage could be exponentially worse. What more do liberals need to know before they make this fight their own? **PETER BEINART**

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THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT PAIN TREATMENT:

The Drug Enforcement Administration recently posted new guidelines on the DEA website to stop the unjustified harassment and prosecution of pain doctors.

THE BAD NEWS ABOUT PAIN TREATMENT:

Two months later the DEA deleted the guidelines, citing unspecified "misstatements."

No one knows why the DEA suddenly withdrew its own rules -- the Agency isn't talking. But it may have been the fact that the guidelines protected doctors from prosecution if they unwittingly prescribed opiates to addicts who deceived them. The government is currently prosecuting several physicians for exactly that conduct.

Over 30 million Americans suffer from chronic pain. A great many may need double or triple the normal amount of medication -- and they are almost always under-treated. These people could legitimately get relief with opioid drugs but they can't find doctors willing to prescribe enough to kill the pain. Taking opioids for pain relief rarely leads to addiction but physicians fear that prescribing large doses will attract the attention of over zealous federal agents, a risk that includes lengthy prison terms. So victims of severe accidents, failed surgery, terminal cancer, and the like are often left to writhe in agony.

Over the last two years the DEA tried to address this crisis, working with medical specialists from the University of Wisconsin's Pain and Policy Studies Group. They set guidelines that would both instruct and safeguard physicians, allowing them to prescribe adequate levels of pain medication without fear of harassment.

These guidelines or something like them should be reinstated so that no one has to suffer needlessly.

Common Sense for Drug Policy
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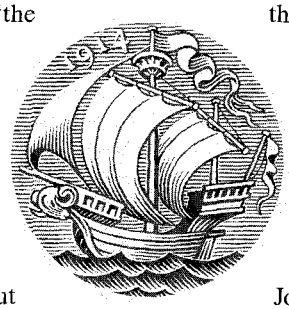
Seeing Red

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE of the Red Cross (ICRC), the humanitarian organization that monitors compliance with the Geneva Conventions, is an unlikely bogeyman. Yet conservatives have spent the past week lambasting the ICRC for having the temerity to do its job. Last Tuesday, *The New York Times* reported that, over the summer, the ICRC found that conditions in the enemy combatant detention facility at Guantánamo Bay—including "use of forced positions" and "some beatings"—were "tantamount to torture." What's more, the ICRC report noted that methods at Guantánamo were turning increasingly "more refined and repressive."

For this, conservatives have concluded that the ICRC, in the words of Rush Limbaugh, "hates America." Perhaps this was inevitable, given the Bush administration's 2002 designation of Al Qaeda and Taliban captives as "enemy combatants"—a legal invention that the ICRC, like most of the world, does not recognize. But the vitriol directed at the world's premier humanitarian organization is impressive. *The Wall Street Journal* indignantly wrote that the United States should work to revoke the ICRC's "special status come future revisions of the Geneva Conventions." On Fox News, Fred Barnes fumed that "there are grounds for telling them to take a hike from and leave Guantánamo." Most offensively, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, in an interview last week with Bill O'Reilly, insinuated that the ICRC was advocating the "release [of the jihadists] that are alive back into the terrorist movement so that they can kill more people."

It is the height of hypocrisy for Rumsfeld to malign the ICRC. His Pentagon has spent nearly three years insisting that the ICRC's presence at Guantánamo Bay obviates any need for further human rights monitoring. In November 2002, when asked about disturbing photographs that had been leaked to the press showing hooded and restrained enemy combatants en route to the prison, then–Defense Department spokeswoman Torie Clarke said, "People also know, but should be reminded, we have the International Red Cross ... to ensure that the treatment of the detainees is absolutely appropriate." And, when three British inmates at Guantánamo charged after their release that they were abused, Navy Secretary Gordon England told CNN in August that the charges couldn't be true because "the International Committee of the Red Cross is here regularly. ... I can't imagine that someone would not have reported this to the ICRC." On Monday, *The Washington Times* editorialized that the ICRC's report should be ignored "without more concrete and substantiated evidence." But, by making the ICRC the only monitor with access to Guantánamo, Rumsfeld has ensured that there can't be any.



In order to maintain access to inmates who need international protection, the ICRC's standard procedure is to report any abuses it finds in detention facilities only to the regime responsible for them. Conservatives consider the ICRC's apparent abandonment of this policy in the case of Guantánamo an indication that the organization is, as the *Journal* put it, "unable to distinguish between good guys and bad." But the ICRC's confidentiality policy doesn't appear to be absolute. In 1992, for instance, Iranian mullahs expelled an ICRC delegation from Iran after charging that the monitors funneled information to a U.N. report that denounced Tehran's appalling human rights record.

More important, it is not the ICRC that's blurring the difference between the good guys and the bad. It's President Bush. Just last week, in a case brought by Guantánamo inmates challenging their detention, the administration's lawyers argued that evidence yielded from torture is admissible in a military tribunal. It's not hard to see how this declaration creates an incentive to commit human rights violations.

Incentives like those are part of a pattern established by Bush in his infamous February 7, 2002, determination that detainees should be treated "in a manner consistent with the principles of Geneva"—but only "to the extent appropriate and consistent with military necessity." Euphemistic and equivocal approaches to human rights deprive the United States of the moral authority necessary to win the war on terrorism. As Senator John McCain recognized in an interview with Fox's Chris Wallace this week, "We are trying to eradicate ... from the earth people who do these kinds of things." Conservatives angry at the ICRC are right to insist on the moral superiority of the United States. But they should recognize that their true adversary in this regard is the Bush administration. ■

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NOTEBOOK

CONDOMS CAN'T PROTECT YOU . . . AND NEITHER CAN ARMOR

INHERIT THE WIND

BILLY TAUZIN OF LOUISIANA WAS one of the most venal politicians ever to sully Capitol Hill. As Michelle Cottle chronicled in these pages ("Cajun Dressing," October 6, 2003), the Republican representative used his perch on the House Energy and Commerce Committee to shill for almost every big business in America—until a business broke enough laws to spark public outrage, at which point Tauzin would hold showboat hearings and recast himself as a consumer champion. Tauzin's most shameless performance came in 2002, when, two years after leading a crusade to derail reform of the accounting industry, he held hearings to harangue Arthur Andersen for its role in the Enron debacle. When Tauzin announced his retirement this year, he must have figured that, given Louisianans' fondness for political dynasties—ergo the Long family—his son Billy Tauzin III ("Little Billy") would have little trouble succeeding daddy as the Republican representative of the state's third congressional district.

But, thankfully, the voters had other ideas. Refusing to reward the 31-year-old ex-lobbyist's blatantly nepotistic campaign—one Tauzin ad asked, "Whose phone call is President Bush going to return?"—they narrowly elected Little Billy's Democratic opponent, Charlie Melancon, as their representative in a runoff election on December 4. "He's just starting," the elder Tauzin said of his son after the defeat. "You're going to hear from him again."

But that might be an empty promise—if recent history is any indication, the children of retrograde politicians are facing increasingly tough roads when it comes to inheriting their parents' positions. In 2002, Scott Armey failed in his bid to succeed his father, Dick, as the representative of Texas's 26th congressional district. And, this year, Brad Smith lost the Republican primary to replace his retiring father, Michigan Representative Nick Smith. Alas, voters didn't feel compelled to do something about the most egregious case of political nepotism—the man sitting in the White House.

Billy Tauzin III

PHYSICIAN, HEAL THYSELF

SENATE MAJORITY LEADER BILL Frist doesn't like to let people forget that, in addition to being a politician, he's a doctor—going so far as to stencil the letters M.D. ostentatiously next to his name on the door of his Capitol office. But, in a recent interview on ABC's "This Week," Frist showed that politics is truly his first calling. Playing off a recent House Government Affairs Committee report that found that eleven of the 13 federally funded abstinence programs are giving out false information—including such nuggets as "the actual ability of condoms to prevent the transmission of HIV/AIDS, even if the product is intact, is not definitively known" and "the popular claim that condoms help prevent the spread of STDs is not supported by the data"—George Stephanopoulos wondered what Dr. Frist thought about one particularly dubious piece of misinformation pedaled by one of the programs: that HIV can be spread through sweat and tears. "Do you believe that tears and sweat can transmit HIV?" Stephanopoulos asked. "I don't know, I can tell you," Frist replied before Stephanopoulos cut him off with an incredulous, "You don't know? . . . You believe that tears and sweat might be able to transmit AIDS?" Frist tried again, sputtering, "Yeah, no, I can tell you that HIV is not very transmissible as an element like, compared to smallpox, compared to the flu. It is not . . ." The good doctor then went on to explain that abstinence is an important part of any strategy to combat AIDS and affirmed that the disease is "one of the great moral and public health tragedies of the last one hundred years." But Stephanopoulos refused to let him off the hook: "Let me just clear this up, though: Do you or do you not believe that tears and sweat can transmit HIV?" Frist finally conceded, "It would be very hard. It would be very hard for tears and sweat, I mean, you can get virus in tears and sweat, but in terms of the degree of infecting somebody, it would be very hard." Funny, but you wouldn't think it would be so hard for a doctor to admit that.

THIS MAN'S ARMY

THIS WEEK IN KUWAIT, DEFENSE Secretary Donald Rumsfeld fielded some tough questions from 2,300 soldiers preparing to deploy to Iraq. To what the Associated Press described as "a big cheer," Specialist Thomas Wilson of the Tennessee National Guard asked why "we soldiers have to dig through local landfills for pieces of scrap metal and compromised ballistic glass to uparmor our vehicles." Naturally, Rumsfeld was unflappable, replying, "You go to war

DAVID COWLES

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with the Army you have." He then explained—to what he must have thought were 2,300 overgrown children—that one of the gravest dangers they face in Iraq are improvised explosive devices (IEDs), which means, "You can have all the armor in the world on a tank and it can [still] be blown up." So not to worry!

What Rumsfeld didn't admit to Wilson and his fellow soldiers is that he is fully responsible for the "Army you have," especially as it relates to heavy armor. A stated objective of Rumsfeld's tenure has been to move the Army away from ponderous forces and toward lighter, more easily deployable units—as in 2002, when he cut funding for the 70-ton Abrams tank, which currently rolls through the streets of Baghdad. Just this week, Rumsfeld reiterated to *The Wall Street Journal* that the military "simply has to be much more facile and agile." Luckily for the country, Bush recently asked Rumsfeld to stay at the Pentagon's helm for another four years. As for anyone concerned about the safety of our troops, we'll see you down at the scrapyard.

DEPARTMENT OF THINGS WE FIND IMPOSSIBLE TO BELIEVE

"I CAN SAY WITHOUT EQUIVOCATION: This president has been pretty heavily influenced by economic theory," —Glenn Hubbard, quoted in *The Washington Post*, December 3

DEPARTMENT OF CONGRATULATIONS

CONGRATULATIONS TO TNR FOREIGN correspondent Massoud Ansari, who also works for Pakistan's *Newsline* magazine, on winning the 2004 Reuters-IUCN Media Award for excellence in environmental reporting for his stories about an oil spill along the Karachi coast. In addition, Ansari, for a second consecutive year, received the coveted All Pakistan Newspaper Society award for his investigative reporting. ■

TNR.commentary

IRAQ'D

SPENCER ACKERMAN

A LOOKING FORWARD IN ANGER: A Sunni member of the interim parliament told *The New York Times* last weekend that Sunni disenfranchisement from the elections would be "the first seed of civil war." But the first seed appears to have already sprouted. *The Washington Post* reported on December 5 that, in Latifiyah, 25 miles south of Baghdad, a new Shia militia calling itself the Anger Brigades battled with Sunni insurgents, using rocket-propelled grenades and assault rifles. It's unclear how large the opposing forces were, but apparently the Shia suffered 16 casualties and the Sunnis seven. Also unclear is whether the Anger Brigades have the blessing of the Shia clerical leadership. According to *The Financial Times*, Grand Ayatollah Sistani denied that the militia has his support, yet the battle took place amid what the *Times* reports is increasing stridency among Shia clerics.

The Anger Brigades reportedly formed to avenge the savage murders of Shia traveling along the crucial road from Baghdad to the holy Shia cities of Karbala and Najaf. The best reporting on these killings—and how they represent a potential starting point for a civil war—came from Tish Durkin in the October 16 edition of *National Journal*. Durkin reported that some Sunni leaders recognized that the murders have been beyond the pale and "have been appealing for mercy" to the emir of the predominantly Shia Rabia tribe, Rabia Mohammed Rabia, with "money and apologies, both traditional balms in such instances." But, the emir told Durkin, "We don't accept money or apologies, that's for sure." What's more, she reports:

> Far from discouraging my sense that the tragedy that has come to his tribe could mean a tragedy for Iraq, he fortifies it. "I cannot hold my people back," he says. "Even if I ask them to, they will not obey."

The rise of the Anger Brigades raises the question of whether the principal Shia militias, those loyal to SCIRI and the Sadrist movement, will follow their path. I have suggested previously that the Shia appear to be inclined to use a January electoral victory to compel the departure of American troops and that this could offer an opening for the Shia leadership to gain some legitimacy from the Sunnis for the political process. It may be that the Anger Brigades are not inclined to wait for any potential opening to the Sunnis, nor might they desire one. What the clerical establishment does about this new militia will say a lot about their intentions for their de facto control of Iraq after January.

&c.

NOAM SCHEIBER

THE WHITE HOUSE FLOATS A TRIAL BALLOON: It looks like Greg Mankiw, the sometimes embattled chairman of the president's Council of Economic Advisors, has offered the strongest hint yet that benefit cuts will be part of Bush's Social Security privatization proposal. Mankiw made his comments on December 2, according to *The New York Times*:

> "The benefits now scheduled for future generations under current law are not sustainable given the projected path of payroll tax revenue," he added. "They are empty promises."

We know that the White House privately favors "option two" of the president's 2001 Social Security task force—the option that embraces the kind of benefit cuts Mankiw was hinting at. But the White House has, to this point, been extremely leery of suggestions that Social Security reform will require such cuts, for obvious reasons. So what was Mankiw doing?

I see two possible explanations. The first is that Mankiw was talking out of school, which is what got him into so much trouble earlier this year (when he suggested that outsourcing was just another way to do free trade). But Mankiw's a pretty smart guy; my hunch is that he learned his lesson the first time. At the very least, the administration probably learned *its* lesson—I'm sure they vet his pronouncements much more carefully than they used to.

The second, and in my mind most likely, possibility is that the White House isn't really embracing benefit cuts. It just wanted Mankiw to test out an argument about why benefit cuts aren't really benefit cuts (i.e., the promised benefits have never really existed since we have no way to pay for them). Mankiw strikes me as the perfect man for this job. He's a brilliant economist, so he's got credibility on the issue. But he's also on his way out of the administration, and he has a history of making truthful but politically dense statements in public. If this tiny little hint ends up provoking an uproar from seniors, the White House can always dismiss it as more freelancing from that tin-eared nerd they're about to send back to Cambridge.

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On the Hill

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BY MICHAEL CROWLEY

AMID THE CELEBRATION over passage of the intelligence reform bill this week, one dissonant voice could be heard through the self-congratulatory din. The new reform bill "practically invites terrorists to come into our country," said one speaker on the House floor Tuesday evening. It is "a recipe for a disaster—the same kind of disaster that occurred on 9/11. ... We ought to vote this down and start over."

That speaker was Jim Sensenbrenner, the Wisconsin representative who chairs the House Judiciary Committee and who was the most determined opponent of the intelligence reform compromise that was finally reached on Capitol Hill this week. For weeks, Sensenbrenner had fought to derail any agreement, arguing that the bill to implement the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission and create a new national intelligence director must include a raft of controversial immigration provisions he has long promoted. Those provisions, equally unpopular with Democrats and Republicans who are wary of alienating Latinos, would have brought down the entire bill. But the famously bullheaded Sensenbrenner refused to budge. Personal appeals from President Bush and Vice President Cheney couldn't sway him. Nor did the eventual capitulation of other Republican holdouts—Duncan Hunter in the House and John Warner in the Senate—who had complained that the bill might threaten military intelligence-gathering. After a triumphal compromise agreement was finally reached Monday night—one that excluded his pet immigration measures—the hard-nosed Judiciary chairman was disgusted. "The current bill is woefully incomplete and one I cannot support," he fumed in a statement. One GOP staffer reports hearing Sensenbrenner defiantly bellowing down a Capitol hallway, "I did not sign that conference report!"

Sensenbrenner may not be well-known outside of Capitol Hill, but, inside Congress, few people were surprised to see him fighting his immigration battle like the last defender of Iwo Jima. Sensenbrenner has a rich history of exasperating GOP leaders and even the Bush White House. And, given his obvious displeasure over the intelligence reform bill's outcome, he's likely to extend that record in entertaining form when Congress reconvenes next year, at which time his Judiciary Committee will take up high-priority GOP issues like tort reform, abortion, the Patriot Act, and, of course, Sensenbrenner's still-unrealized immigration reforms. "His pride will be on the line," explains one Democratic Judiciary staffer. Hell hath no fury like a chairman scorned.

BY ANY STANDARD, Jim Sensenbrenner has it pretty good. His great-grandfather founded the Kimberly-Clark Corporation, makers of paper products that include Kleenex and Kotex. If that means the occasional snickering tampon joke, so be it: Sensenbrenner is worth more than $10 million. Even so, Sensenbrenner is a lottery player who, in 1997, bought a $2 ticket in Washington, D.C. and hit a $250,000 jackpot. But even that wasn't enough. He was spotted buying another ticket a few months later.

Somehow all this good fortune hasn't translated into a sunny disposition. In a building of backslappers and glad-handers, the 61-year-old Sensenbrenner—a 26-year House veteran from a highly Republican district near Milwaukee—is something of a scold, a prim hall monitor among unruly children. He is not part of the clubby leadership gang that revolves around Majority Leader Tom DeLay. But he's not friendly with many Democrats, either. "He's not the warmest guy. Jim has a distrustful nature," says a senior GOP aide. "He's curmudgeonly," adds a Democratic Judiciary Committee member. "He's not a pleasant guy. There's not a moment where you feel like he's someone you want to hang out with."

One manifestation of this is Sensenbrenner's obsession with order and procedure. Since taking over the committee from its former chairman, Henry Hyde, in 2001, Sensenbrenner has insisted on punctuality, and calls on committee members based on their arrival time rather than seniority. He once canceled an appearance before his committee by Attorney General John Ashcroft because Ashcroft failed to submit his written testimony at least two days in advance.

Unpleasantness in a committee chairman is no shocking thing. But, unlike other imperious congressional barons—the hyper-partisan Ways and Means Committee chairman Bill Thomas, for instance—Sensenbrenner exasperates members of both parties. Although the Judiciary Committee tends to be a home for crusading extremists—"the crazies of the left and the crazies of the right," as one Democratic member puts it—Sensenbrenner has been relatively moderate, willing to stand up to the GOP's right-wing base. For instance, he infuriated pro-gun conservatives in 2002 when he blocked a bill that would have allowed current and former police officers to carry concealed weapons even in jurisdictions with laws against doing so. Saying the bill infringed on states' rights, Sensenbrenner refused to hold hearings. Only after a whopping 275 co-sponsors had signed on did House Republican leaders finally force the chairman to act. (Still, Sensenbrenner pointedly declined to invite the bill's sponsor, Representative Randy "Duke" Cunningham, to testify at the hearing.)

Shortly after September 11, even many Democrats were chary of standing up to the Bush administration. Not Sensenbrenner. When his committee was charged with writing

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the first incarnation of the Patriot Act, Sensenbrenner started by complaining that Ashcroft's proposed measures were draconian and "sacrificed civil liberties." Sensenbrenner then worked with Judiciary Democrats to add a two-year sunset provision to the bill's expanded police-wiretap and surveillance powers. The resulting bill passed the committee unanimously, an amazing feat for a bunch of ideological "crazies." Sensenbrenner's role led to a strange outcome in which the Democratic Senate's bill was far closer to Ashcroft's request (a "rubber stamp," Sensenbrenner grumbled) than the House version. Though the measure was toughened up some during a House-Senate conference, the sunset remained, albeit as a four-year rather than a two-year clause. And Sensenbrenner stayed on the case: In 2002, he submitted 50 written questions about the bill to the Justice Department and warned he would "start blowing a fuse," even threatening to subpoena Ashcroft, if he didn't get answers.

Sensenbrenner can be almost comically stubborn. The more you push him, the firmer he stands. When Congress was debating the so-called Amber Alert bill to help track down abducted children in 2003, the father of famed kidnapping victim Elizabeth Smart repeatedly attacked Sensenbrenner publicly for "hurting children" by bogging down the bill with added provisions its sponsors hadn't sought. (Sound familiar?) Most politicians would sprint from a showdown with the father of an abducted teen. But Sensenbrenner didn't back down, and he got his way in the end.

Even the normally mild-mannered über-pundit Norm Ornstein has been driven to intense frustration by the immovable Sensenbrenner. Ever since September 11, Ornstein has crusaded for plans to ensure that Congress can function after a major terrorist attack, to avoid the possibility of a House run by a tiny band of survivors. Ornstein has drummed up wide support for a sensible idea: a constitutional amendment allowing for quick replacements of dead or crippled House members through temporary appointments. But Sensenbrenner, whose committee must approve such an amendment, has almost singlehandedly blocked any substantive action, leading Ornstein to call him "an obdurate and inflexible jerk." Adds Ornstein: "When he digs in his heels, he will not move."

DAVID COWLES

THAT WAS CERTAINLY the case with the intelligence reform bill. When the House version passed through his committee this fall, Sensenbrenner insisted that it include a series of immigration provisions that the 9/11 Commission had not recommended. Many had little to do with terrorism—one would have made it easier to deport immigrants to countries where they might be detained or tortured, and another would have made it easier to detain people indefinitely. "His big issue seemed to be an anti-immigrant agenda," says one Democratic aide familiar with the negotiations. "It had little to do with terror." Another provision, which would have immediately deported any immigrant who could not produce documentation of five years' residence in the United States, amounted to "a dragnet that just sweeps people up and expels them" by the thousands, says the aide. "It was very harsh stuff." Although the full House passed Sensenbrenner's provisions, many had no hope in the Senate. But Sensenbrenner refused to compromise, even after Senate negotiators agreed to his less controversial requests, such as 8,000 new detention beds for immigration violators and 2,000 new border guards. Above all, he was fixated on preventing states from issuing drivers' licenses to illegal immigrants and ensuring that licenses expire at the same time as a license holder's immigrant visa.

What evolved was a standoff that had more to do with immigration politics than intelligence reform. Tom Tancredo, a hard-line anti-immigration Republican from Colorado, says Sensenbrenner was picking a fight that has been simmering in Congress for months now. "What we see happening is a metamorphosis. The majority of the conference is moving from being rather shy about getting involved with this [immigration] issue to now becoming very vocal," Tancredo says. The GOP position had been that "you cannot talk about immigration, you can't even talk about anything that looks like reform, because we will lose votes among Hispanics, and even the president is opposed." But, since the election, he says, "There are plenty of members now willing to take on the president and the leadership." Sensenbrenner, he explains, wasn't just speaking for himself—he was speaking for that group (even if, Tancredo can't help grousing,

Continued on page 16

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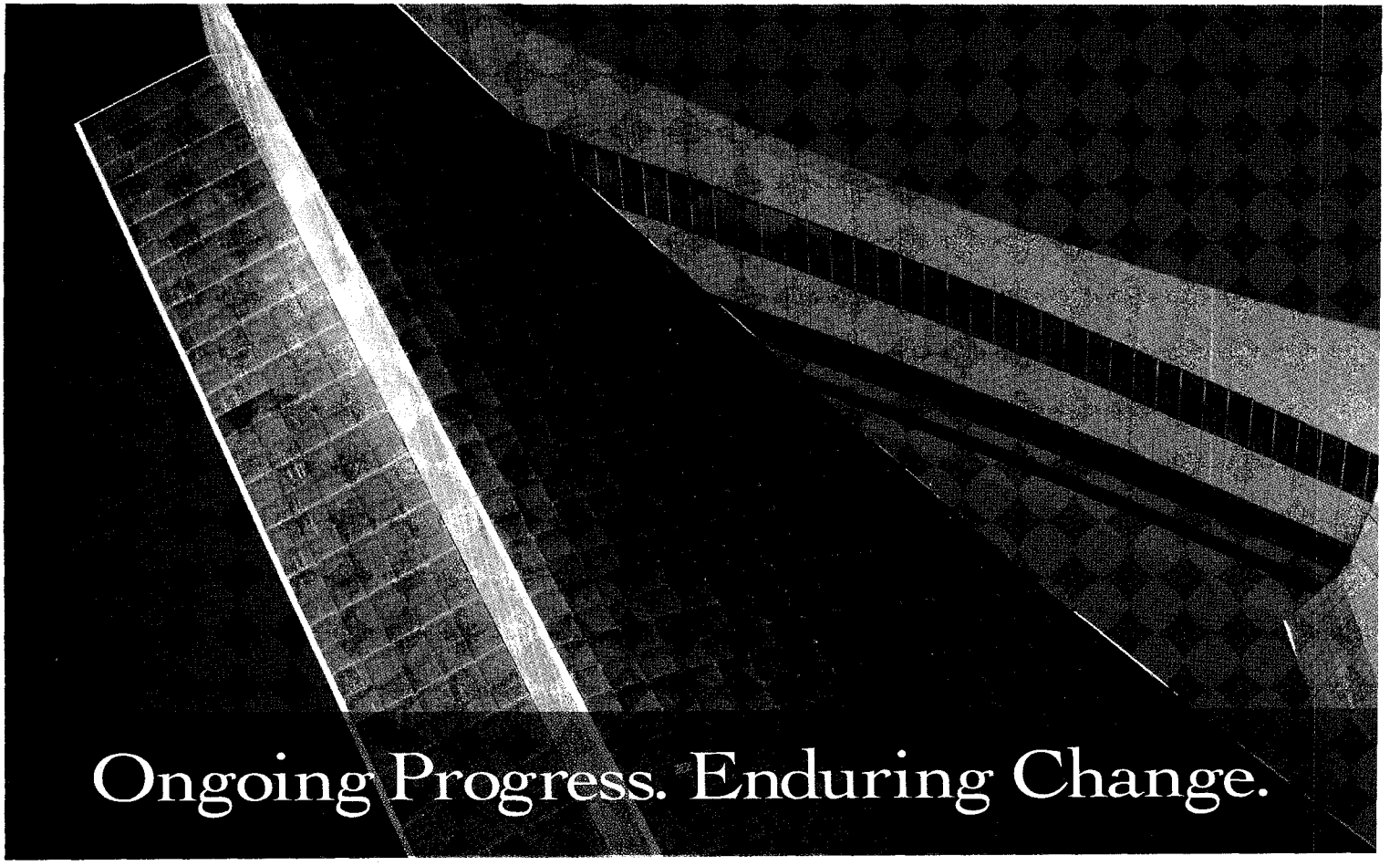

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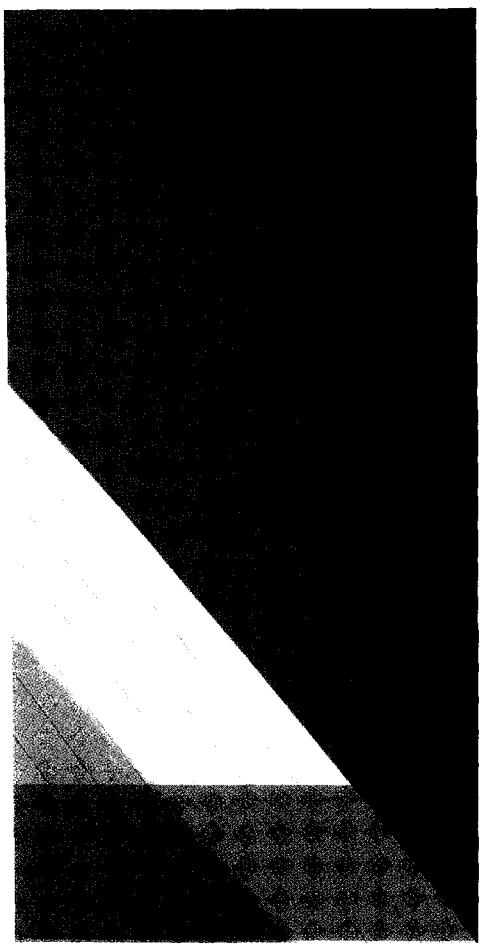

Reform is vital to Saudi Arabia's future. We are carrying out initiatives to improve political participation, education, financial controls and contribution to the world economy. Through a series of dedicated efforts, the Kingdom is creating an environment that fosters modernization and strengthens our involvement in the global community.

Political Participation – Voter registration began this November for municipal elections to be held in February 2005. Citizens will elect representatives in 178 municipal councils in cities and villages in the Kingdom's 13 provinces.

Educational Reform – Saudi Arabia is in the middle of a multi-year program to update textbooks and curricula, introduce new teaching methods and provide better training for our teachers. These initiatives are aimed at providing our young people with modern education.

Financial Oversight – Saudi laws to combat money laundering and terrorist financing have been recognized as among the toughest in the world by such organizations as the Financial Action Task Force of the G-8. The government has frozen bank accounts, seized funds and made arrests in conjunction with terror financing. We have even gone so far as to end the collection of cash contributions in mosques and public places and have established a moratorium on the ability of individuals to send money abroad.

Economic Reforms – Saudi Arabia, the largest economy in the Arab World, is applying for accession to the World Trade Organization and has signed 35 bilateral agreements with other WTO members, including China, Japan, Argentina, Australia and the European Union. The Kingdom has also taken steps to further open its economy to foreign investment and to privatize government-owned entities.

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"he's a little reluctant to share the spotlight"). That might be one reason why House leaders like Speaker Dennis Hastert at first appeared awfully reluctant to lock horns with Sensenbrenner over the issue.

Now, Sensenbrenner may be the face of immigration reform on the Hill. Speaking on the House floor before the intelligence reform vote this week, he vowed to rejoin the fight again next year: "I can assure you that this issue is not going to go away." Hastert has said immigration reform will now be a top priority next year. And, if Sensenbrenner doesn't get his way, he might take out his anger by blocking other Bush administration priorities. For instance, the Judiciary Committee will hold hearings next year on renewing the Patriot Act, which expires at the end of 2005. Sensenbrenner has already vowed to place "the burden of proof" on the administration to defend each of the act's provisions—including the wiretap and surveillance powers he was skeptical of back in 2001.

Given recent signs of friction between the White House and Congress on a series of issues—not just the intelligence bill, but also impending tax and Social Security reform—there's no telling which other powerful chairmen might start asserting themselves next year. "Something's going on with Republicans right now, where they're sniffing around each other, trying to figure out where the balance of power is going to lie in a lame-duck presidency," says the Democratic Judiciary Committee member. Jim Sensenbrenner may be only the first of many thorns in the White House's side. ■

Moscow Dispatch

Orange Envy

BY MASHA GESSEN

I WORK FOR a Moscow city paper. We cover Moscow. But, after the Ukrainian election last month, half our staff and freelancers went to Kiev, where few of them had any legitimate reporting business. Then, they further complicated the production process by calling from Kiev to scream into the phone about how positively ecstatic they were. Demoralized, I wrote an essay called "Orange Envy." No wonder: Virtually every liberal I know in Moscow is positively green with Orange Envy, envy of the orange-wearing demonstrators in Kiev. At the height of the orange protests, in fact, the streets of Kiev were full of Russians—liberal politicians, young political activists, journalists, and others who wanted to breathe the air of protest.

The reason Russian liberals are so eager to jump on the Ukrainian opposition bandwagon—despite the anti-Russian flavor at the fringes of Victor Yushchenko's movement—is that this isn't just an uprising against a regime backed by Moscow. It's an uprising against the very people who have created the Putin regime and the tools they used to do it. The campaign of Victor Yanukovich, the outgoing Ukrainian president's handpicked successor, was designed and run, from start to finish, by Russian campaign professionals and media figures instrumental in building President Vladimir Putin's power. By creating an authoritarian regime at home, they have put themselves out of work: Russia no longer has a market for people who specialize in swinging contested elections. There aren't any. So they picked up their toolboxes and traveled to Ukraine, where they tried to create a clone of Moscow—and failed because Ukrainians rejected their tools of intimidation.

ARGUABLY THE MOST important component of the "orange uprising" has been the rebellion of leading Ukrainian journalists. The best-publicized episode was the one-woman protest staged by a sign-language interpreter on a state TV channel. Interpreting a report on the results of the run-off election, she suddenly signed, "The election results have been falsified. ... I am sorry I have had to translate lies." But far more important have been the refusals on the part of top news editors and writers to follow *temniki*, or "topic papers," handed down to them by the Ukrainian government's Russian helpers. These papers are memos, circulated every morning, listing the topics to be covered in the course of the day and outlining how they are to be covered. A *temnik* usually contains phrases like "Interpretation: to be shown in full. Quote opinions of ..." A list of politicians to quote follows. But, in Ukraine, after the top editors and writers refused to follow the memos, they then started leaking the contents of the *temniki*. As the second round of voting neared, the opposition press published leaked *temniki* virtually every day.

Temnik memos like these have been used in Russia since Putin's early days but, remarkably, have virtually never been leaked by journalists who receive them. The journalists who work for Russia's state-controlled TV channels—the only channels on the air—are a far more cowed lot than their Ukrainian peers. Well-publicized dismissals of top Russian journalists have shown Moscow reporters that breaking ranks will cost them their jobs and make them unemployable. In Ukraine, meanwhile, the media, while certainly affected by state meddling, simply haven't taken the kind of thorough beating the Russians have, in part because the government in Kiev has not been organized enough to crack down on all journalists. Before the recent election, in fact, Ukraine had two TV channels not controlled by the state.

Another reliable tool of the Russian campaign professionals is Putin himself. In Russia, Putin seems to have the magic touch. Regional candidates who advertise themselves shaking hands with Putin have a way of winning regional campaigns, while incumbent regional governors shunned by Putin not only lose office but also often wind up facing bo-

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gus criminal charges. It's not just that Putin is a popular politician; more important is his perceived omnipotence among many Russians, bolstered by his control of the media and his dominance of parliament. The simple message Putin's campaigning in regional elections sends is, "If you elect Putin's man, the region will thrive; vote for someone else, and you will be punished." And, while Putin does have some tools for punishing Ukraine, such as shutting off its natural gas supply as winter approaches, Ukrainians increasingly realize that their European neighbors could deploy carrots to balance Russia's sticks. So, when Putin appeared on all three of Ukraine's state TV channels to endorse Yanukovich, the effect seemed to be a drop in support for the Moscow-backed candidate. Still, unwilling to believe his presence might actually harm a candidate, Putin kept reaffirming his support for Yanukovich, and, after the contested vote, kept congratulating him on his supposed victory.

Finally, there was the shame factor. As Putin made inept excuses for his political faux pas—claiming, for example, that he congratulated Yanukovich the first time on the basis of exit poll data—Russia began to look not so much like a despotic Big Brother as an embarrassing senile aunt. Aside from Putin, the only foreign leader to recognize Yanukovich as Ukraine's new president was the Belarusian dictator Alexander Lukashenko. These are hardly friends a winner would choose, and it shows how retrograde Russia's political culture has become.

Scenes like this drew Russian journalists to Kiev to witness the orange revolution and lament the lack of popular protest back home.

ALEXANDER DEMIANCHUK/REUTERS/LANDOV

These Russian liberals have been watching their government's reaction to events in Ukraine for signs of what will happen in their own country. For a while, the big question debated in both Moscow and Kiev was whether Putin would take action—after the Ukrainian opposition refused to concede—that would lead to bloodshed. Warranted or not, the assumption among liberals and Putinites alike seemed to be that Ukrainian pro-government forces would never open fire on the Ukrainian opposition—but that Russian special forces, stationed in Kiev, could start the fighting. As the Kremlin ratcheted up cold war–style rhetoric, the fear deepened. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov made a fiery statement last week blaming the West for the tension in Ukraine and clearly implying that any bloodshed would be on the West's hands. Domestically, the Kremlin didn't mince words either: RBC, an influential pro-Putin news service, published a story calling Russian supporters of the Ukrainian protestors "a fifth column" and warning that a dangerous fate awaits them when they return home.

And then, after Putin once again tried to work his magic by staging a highly publicized meeting with Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma, Ukraine disentangled itself from its predicament with remarkable grace. The Ukrainian Supreme Court issued a damning decision finding numerous violations in the run-off elections and ordering another vote. In ruling for the democratic process, the court clearly decided for the opposition—though the standoff continues, with foes of the opposition leader blocking key measures in parliament this weekend that would have altered election laws.

Still, the message for anti-Putin Russians was less encouraging. The miracle cannot be repeated in Russia, not only because of the cowed Russian media but also because Russia no longer has an independent judiciary, such as Ukraine's, capable of upholding the rule of law. Indeed, the Kremlin has recently staged what amounts to a series of rigged show trials—most prominently of oil tycoon Mikhail Khodorkhovsky and of two scholars convicted of high treason despite virtually no evidence against them. In these and other cases, the Russian courts, which had gone through some reform in the 1990s, have been returned to their roles as Kremlin helpers. The courts have been intimidated into submission, and judicial leadership has been stacked with appointees close to Putin. The Russian president has recently even unveiled plans to do away with any pretense of judicial independence altogether by eliminating judicial confirmation.

Kuchma may have wanted to neuter Ukraine's courts as well, but he never had the capability, or the media backing, to do so. But at least Russians are now likely to have a nice place to flee to should things get really bad. Until, that is, Ukraine joins the European Union and closes its border to the East. ■

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Abidjan Dispatch

Rumblings

BY MICHAEL PEEL

OUTSIDE THE Hotel Ivoire in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire's main city, loyalist youths recently milled around the site where as many as ten protestors were killed days earlier in a confrontation with French peacekeepers. As I began talking to one of the young men—a member of the self-styled Young Patriots movement of pro-government militants—a small crowd quickly gathered, watching me closely. Fortunately, I passed the initial nationality test. "He's not French, he's British," one man called out.

Yards away, the plinth of a statue of Andre Latrille, a former French colonial governor of Côte d'Ivoire, was covered in fresh red graffiti. The message on one side asked Ivorians never to forget those who fell "under the bullets of the French army." Yet the anger at France is hardly the main story here, and the recent Western media coverage of white foreigners fleeing Côte d'Ivoire, formerly the region's most stable state, is actually just a sideshow. In September 2002, rebels in the Ivorian army launched a coup against the nation's president, Laurent Gbagbo. When that failed, they took over the northern part of the country, sparking a war that was halted last year by a French-brokered peace agreement. Now that agreement is failing, violence is erupting again, and the real danger is that the country could be heading toward pogroms against opponents of the regime and those not deemed sufficiently Ivorian. This is all the more dangerous because of Côte d'Ivoire's history as a nation built on immigrant labor. Unless the world acts, the country's millions of immigrants may now be in grave danger.

FIGHTING BETWEEN FRENCH and Ivorian forces in recent weeks has claimed most headlines about Côte d'Ivoire. The violence started again last month with a series of Ivorian government air attacks on the country's rebel-held north, the worst fighting since the war's official end in July last year. One bombing raid killed nine French peacekeepers, who were part of the contingent of more than 4,000 who, along with 6,000 U.N. troops, are supervising the peace deal brokered by Paris between the government and the rebels. France responded by destroying most of Côte d'Ivoire's small air force, triggering mass anti-French demonstrations in Abidjan by loyalists incited by bellicose media broadcasts. State television continuously repeated an advertisement showing marching soldiers and announcing that the security forces had begun the process of reunifying Côte d'Ivoire, which has been divided in two since the rebels launched their failed coup in September 2002. And anti-French demonstrations by loyalists in Abidjan have been given heavy play in France, which once regarded Côte d'Ivoire as its jewel in Africa because of its stability and relative wealth.

On the ground, anti-French sentiment carries much weight. Loyalists at impromptu roadblocks around Abidjan's otherwise deserted streets stopped cars and frisked passengers. At one checkpoint, a bare-chested young man whose breath smelled of alcohol leaned in the window, saw I was a foreigner, and drew his finger across my throat. (Another man, who knew I was a journalist, quickly ushered him away.) A third man leaned in the window to repeat the loyalists' main claim: that France is in league with Côte d'Ivoire's northern insurgents in trying to overthrow the elected government. "The solution to the crisis is that France respects the sovereignty of Côte d'Ivoire," he said. "It's the French that support the rebels." Another day, as I left the Hotel Ivoire, a man heard my British accent and called me over to talk. He said he was a history professor at Abidjan's University of Cocody and began to explain how Côte d'Ivoire's troubles are all part of a French plot to retake the country.

The loyalists clearly have done horrible things to Westerners. Mobs rampaging through Abidjan have been burning expatriate businesses and schools and, according to the French government, raping French women. But the real causes of the violence are much deeper. Many Ivorians see the northern rebellion in part as a protest against the concept of *Ivoirité* (or Ivorian-ness) promulgated under the disastrous 1993–1999 presidency of Henri Konan-Bedie. Bedie promoted the idea that Ivorians from the north, differentiated from the south by its ethnic heritage and by religion (the north is primarily Muslim), were more likely to be of immigrant stock and therefore less "purebred."

Bedie's doctrine poisoned the political system. The rule of Gbagbo, a southerner, is challenged by some Ivorians in part because he won an election in 2000 from which the main northern candidate was excluded after it was alleged he was not Ivorian. This election, too, helped spark the rebellion. And, under Gbagbo, so-called "intellectuals" who promote the vision of Côte d'Ivoire's ruling elite as victims of outside forces, including northerners and Muslim immigrants, have been given free rein. The Ivorian media, mostly directed by the state, has become dangerously shrill and chauvinistic, almost like Rwandan radio stations before the 1994 genocide. A recent issue of *Our Way*, a leading pro-Gbagbo newspaper, carried a story headlined "REBELS TERRORIZE THE PEOPLE" and made the claim—attributed to anonymous sources—that immigrants from Mali, Guinea, and Burkina Faso were brutalizing residents of a town in western Côte d'Ivoire. Similarly, several weeks ago, state TV broadcast a stream of monologues by government loyalists encouraging war against rebels and immigrants. "If

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you are asleep, wake up," said one TV broadcaster. "If you are eating, stop eating. Rise up and liberate Côte d'Ivoire."

This crude regional differentiation has extra potency because of Côte d'Ivoire's cosmopolitan post-independence history. Félix Houphouët-Boigny, the autocrat who ruled between independence in 1960 and his death in 1993, built West Africa's strongest economy on foreign labor. By encouraging workers to come from neighboring countries like Mali and Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire became the world's largest producer of cocoa. Before the civil war began, immigrants, mostly African Muslims, were estimated to account for nearly a third of the population.

It is these immigrants that some loyalists are really after. Against a background of economic decline and conflict throughout West Africa, many ordinary Ivorians have responded enthusiastically to a simple xenophobic explanation for their terrifyingly complex problems. In recent months, government loyalists have begun systematically attacking groups they believe to be sympathetic to northerners. The Abidjan offices of the Rally of the Republicans (RDR), a political party with a northern power base, were recently gutted by arson; earlier, a worker for Alassane Ouattara, an exiled RDR leader, disappeared and then turned up, dead and mutilated, in Abidjan. A few weeks later, the offices of *The Patriot*, a newspaper that backed the RDR, was ransacked and set ablaze. A journalist from *The Patriot* said the damage was done by a mob of 150 loyalist youths armed with pistols, sticks, and machetes, chanting war songs in southern and central Ivorian languages. Meanwhile, Human Rights Watch has reported that, earlier this year, government loyalists unleashed a violent crackdown against opposition supporters in Abidjan, killing at least 120. And, all through 2004, loyalist militias have conducted lethal attacks against immigrant farmers throughout western Côte d'Ivoire.

Many northerners and Ivorians with perceived sympathies toward northerners or immigrants have now fled and are living in fear. At Abidjan's port—its loading cranes inactive because of the violence—three immigrant security guards leaned on the gate of their deserted offices and explained that they would face a catastrophe if peacekeepers left. They talked of the day-to-day official harassment they now experience, including home visits by government officials to check identity papers. They worried that, if they did not leave, they could soon be the targets of ethnic violence. Another man (originally from Burkina Faso), a guard at one of Abidjan's top hotels, told me how he now had to pay 1,000 CFA francs at police checkpoints around the city whenever he is stopped. He had lived in Côte d'Ivoire for almost 30 years and was growing terrified of the open hostility toward foreigners. "Before, [people were] the same, nobody was different," he said. "Now it's not like that."

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY doesn't have much time to stop widespread ethnic violence from erupting. Côte d'Ivoire's reputation as a stable anchor in a troubled part of the world has already been destroyed. Worse violence could trigger another round of conflict in a region barely recovering from wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

The arms embargo imposed on the warring parties by the U.N. Security Council this month is a start, as are the mediation efforts by South African President Thabo Mbeki this week. But they are only a start. The U.N. sanctions—which include the possibility of travel bans and asset freezes on individuals deemed to be undermining the peace process—sound tough, but past arms embargoes have been notoriously ineffective in West Africa. Since rebels have allies in surrounding countries and the government has access to ports, peacekeeping troops need the power and resources to block suspected weapons shipments.

At the same time, France may have to scale back its involvement to reduce the loyalists' ability to blame Paris for Ivorian problems. France's actions, after all, have angered some moderate Ivorians—French troops killed some 20 Ivorian civilians and soldiers in recent fighting. Instead, Côte d'Ivoire will need a larger, credible multinational peacekeeping force—perhaps the kind of EU rapid-reaction troops for Africa that Tony Blair has proposed. Only then could the peace agreement survive. But recent history suggests this is unlikely. The region has attracted only limited additional peacekeeping interest from the United Nations, and the European Union could take years to put Blair's ideas into practice. For now, it seems, the jewel of Africa could be permanently tarnished. ■

Berlin Dispatch

Unreconciled

BY JOHN B. JUDIS

HANS-ULRICH KLOSE, a thin, graying, 67-year-old Social Democrat, is deputy chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs in the Bundestag, Germany's parliament. Known for his pro-American views, he was critical of Chancellor Gerhard Schröder for aligning Germany too closely with France against the United States before the Iraq war. But, seated around a table in the Bundestag on a cold, gray Berlin morning, Klose gives a cryptic answer when asked about the advisability of seeking regime change in Islamic countries. "It was worthwhile in Germany, but I don't think it is worthwhile in countries of that kind," he says. "They don't want to commit suicide. If you really look at the world, and think we are heading for a clash of

John B. Judis visited Germany through the generosity of the Atlantik-Brücke.

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civilization, then it should be another country. I forget the name of the country." I ask Klose whether he is referring to Pakistan. Someone else conjectures Saudi Arabia. He shakes his head. Suddenly, it occurs to me that he is talking about the United States.

What Klose may have expressed wryly, other Germans put more boldly in reaction to George W. Bush's reelection. At lunch near the Brandenburg Gate, a senior government official tells me, "The result of the election was devastating. The question for us is whether the United States has now shifted decisively to the right." At a small gathering of officials and intellectuals in Berlin, the guests mull—and finally reject—a comparison between Bush's United States and Germany's darker past, but they still worry that the United States could be on a "slippery slope" toward religious fanaticism. Antipathy to the United States unites left and right. One November day, left-wing demonstrators are out on Berlin's famous boulevard, Unter den Linden, with signs accusing Bush of terrorism. Around the same time, in Saxony, part of the former East, politicians from the far-right Nationalist Party of Germany call for an end to U.S. investment.

In September 2002, Schröder rode popular opposition to the Iraq war to reelection, pledging not to send German troops into battle. It might be expected that, with another tough reelection campaign looming in two years, Schröder would continue to exploit public opposition to the war and to the Bush administration, moving Berlin closer to Paris. And yet, since Bush's reelection, Schröder has stepped up efforts to mend fences with the White House. Says Gary Smith, executive director of the American Academy in Berlin: "Schröder realized that [French President Jacques] Chirac is trying to take him too far. The Germans understand that their future is in a strong link to the United States." But unfortunately, even as Schröder has reached out, Washington has continued to ignore Europe's largest nation.

SCHRÖDER'S MOST NOTABLE attempt to conciliate the United States has come over Iraq. He adamantly opposed the U.S. invasion, favoring containment against Saddam. Yet German officials have not taken the same view of the occupation as the French. While Chirac is virtually attempting to force the United States out of Iraq, the Germans believe that, while the United States made a mistake in invading, it would be equally mistaken for the White House to retreat in the face of radical insurgents. Speaking with German officials, I was surprised to hear little protest about the siege of Falluja. One German foreign ministry official told me, "The United States is at war and has no choice. It would be worse to fall back and let things go backwards." Harald Braun, Schröder's deputy security adviser, put German objectives this way: "Chancellor Schröder has stated very clearly: No German troops in Iraq. He made this statement not because he so pleased, but because it reflects a deep felt concern in the German public and parliament. However, the German government sees instability in Iraq as a problem that affects us at least as much as the United States, because we are much closer geographically to the Middle East. We are quite willing to help stabilize Iraq."

In June, in fact, Schröder agreed to a U.S. plan to send NATO trainers to assist the Iraqi police and military, though he insisted Germans do the actual training in neighboring Middle Eastern states. German trainers are now working out of the United Arab Emirates. And, in the wake of the U.S. election, the German government made a more unequivocal gesture. At a November meeting in Berlin of the Paris Club—a group of 20 creditor nations—German Finance Minister Hans Eichel worked with American Treasury Secretary John Snow to craft a plan to reduce Iraq's debt to non-Arab nations by 80 percent. That agreement ended a year of tortuous negotiations and forced other creditor countries, including France, to agree.

Now, German officials want reciprocal goodwill gestures from the Bush administration on Iran's nuclear ambitions and the euro-dollar exchange rate. The Germans fear that the Iranians want to develop nuclear weapons and that, if they succeed, they will destabilize an already chaotic region. According to Klose, the Germans see three options in Iran: diplomacy aimed at gaining concessions through carrots and sticks, trade sanctions through the U.N. Security Council to pressure the Iranians, or a military strike aimed at Iran's nuclear facilities. The Germans don't see diplomacy as a cure-all, but they see sanctions as unfeasible and a military strike as strategically disastrous. Says one foreign ministry official, "We worry that a military strike is technically and strategically problematic. If Iran were attacked, that could lead to an explosion among Shiites in Iraq. Maybe in the whole region."

As a result, Germany joined Great Britain and France last year in launching a diplomatic effort. Germans acknowledge that the EU effort relies on the threat of sanctions or military force, but the agreement itself would rest on Iran giving up the development of nuclear weapons in exchange for aid and a security guarantee from the United States. An agreement would conceivably include U.S. diplomatic recognition and sponsorship of Iran's entry into the World Trade Organization. Says Klose, "I have heard the United States is considering security guarantees for Pyongyang. If the United States is considering them for an evil state like North Korea, why not for Iran?"

But, while American officials have not denounced the EU efforts, they have been unwilling to offer guarantees that the European Union could use to woo the Iranians. Instead, the United States appears obsessed with the military option. One German official who met with his American counterparts in mid-October says, "When I was there, I heard repeatedly about a military strike against Iran." EU negotiators who came to Washington in October also encountered U.S. hostility. The Europeans had gotten Russia and China, which have substantial economic ties to Iran, to agree to a diplomatic strategy if the United States

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went along. Iran would be promised aid and security in exchange for abandoning its nuclear program; if it refused, the matter would be referred to the Security Council for a vote on sanctions. If that happened, Russia would support sanctions, and China would abstain rather than veto a resolution. When the Germans took this plan to the Bush administration in late October, they received initial support from Secretary of State Colin Powell, but soon the administration, led by Under Secretary of State John Bolton, balked.

The Germans also want the Bush administration to help halt the dollar's precipitous decline against the euro, a fall that is hurting German exports and, in the opinion of some German bankers, threatening a global recession. The euro was designed to enjoy rough parity with the dollar. It initially fell in value but, in 2002, began to rise, and this year it has skyrocketed to over $1.30. The Europeans worry that the falling dollar, which raises the price of European exports, will imperil Europe's export-dependent economies. According to Deutsche Bank Senior Economist Werner Becker, each 10 percent rise in the euro against the dollar reduces the European Union's annual growth by half a percent. Germany can hardly afford any impediment to growth: Its economy is only projected to expand by 1.3 percent this year.

But Germany's banking establishment is even more worried about the threat the falling dollar poses to the world economy. They attribute the dollar's decline primarily to the steep rise of the U.S. "twin deficits"—the budget deficit and the current account deficit. "The American budget is out of order," Becker says at Deutsche Bank's towering glass office in Frankfurt. In the 1990s, foreign investors happily bought massive amounts of dollars; but, in recent weeks, central bankers in Russia and China have hinted that they might shift to euros. The fear, German bankers say, is that, if foreign central banks become hesitant to finance U.S. deficits, the United States will have to raise interest rates dramatically to woo them back. Higher interest rates will discourage domestic investment, and the U.S. economy will plummet—taking Europe and Asia with it.

German bankers also blame the dollar's fall on weak consumer demand in Europe, which is fueling the trade deficit. But they don't expect Germany's recently adopted economic structural reforms to raise consumer demand for several years. That places the onus for change on the United States. The short-run solution, many German officials say, is for the Bush administration to come out strongly against the dollar's fall while arranging with other bankers to increase the demand for greenbacks. This kind of strategy has worked in the past—it helped boost the dollar in the 1995 agreement between the United States and Japan and lower it again in the 2000 EU-U.S. accord. But, for these measures to have a lasting effect, the White House would also need to commit itself to reducing the U.S. budget deficit through tax increases or spending cuts.

Bush, however, has strenuously resisted these European pleas. Instead, the White House has continued to talk down the dollar. In a recent tour of European capitals, Treasury Secretary Snow blamed the dollar's fall on the EU countries' failure to grow. "The euro zone is growing below its potential," Snow said. "When a major part of the global economy is below potential, there are negative consequences." Snow also insisted that government intervention to raise the dollar's value couldn't work. At the Berlin conference last month, Germany proposed that the 20 nations endorse a statement that "excess volatility and disorderly movements in exchange rates are undesirable for economic growth." Berlin had reason to believe the Americans would agree to the statement—American representatives at a G-7 meeting last February had endorsed a similar statement. But, this time, Bush administration representatives refused to accept any statement about exchange rates. Said Schröder, "It's difficult to ask Europeans to implement structural reforms—which they are already doing—and at the same time not put a lot of focus on [their] own economic issues."

DURING BUSH'S FIRST term, his administration's hostility toward "old Europe" speeded European unification. It led, among other things, to the decisions of all 25 EU nations to accelerate the development of the European Union's own rapid-reaction force, designed to replace NATO as an instrument of European military intervention. That's not necessarily a bad thing. Expanding and strengthening the European Union means expanding the realm of democracies committed to eliminating the nationalist rivalries that led to centuries of war.

But the Bush administration didn't just accelerate the unification of Europe; it also gave Chirac's view of Europe as a "counterweight" wide currency (see Stéphanie Giry, "Collateral," December 13). After Bush's reelection, Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodriguez Zapatero told the German weekly *Der Spiegel*, "Europe must believe that, in 20 years, it can become the most important world power." This view of Europe, and the strategy that might achieve it, has a clear downside for the United States—and for the world. If Europe becomes a contending force against, rather than a partner with, the United States, world politics will, in some important respects, have returned to the parlous circumstances that led to two world wars and a depression.

Germany is America's best hope to preserve a united Europe within an Atlantic alliance. Former U.S. Ambassador to Germany John Kornblum, now chairman of Lazard & Co. in Berlin, says, "The United States has an unbelievable partner here. Germans and Americans like each other. This is the place where we can define our role in Europe. ... But we have picked a fight with each other and have the worst relations ever." Kornblum, like other experienced observers, thinks that Schröder, in spite of public opinion, is now trying for a rapprochement with the United States, but Kornblum is worried about how the Bush administration will respond. How it does could determine not just the direction of Europe in the coming decade, but of the world. ■

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Neocon v. neocon on Iran.

Identity Crisis

BY FRANKLIN FOER

Members of Iran's conservative Basij militia protest Iran's deal with Britain, France, and Germany to suspend its uranium processing. But it's not clear that even Iran's reformists would be any more likely to give up the country's nuclear program.

IN THE WEEKS after September 11, 2001, Clifford May, a former journalist and Republican National Committee official, launched a new think tank called the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies (FDD). Unlike the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) or other Washington bastions of chin-tugging wonks, FDD devotes itself almost exclusively to Topic A: international terrorism. While FDD has a smattering of Democrats like Chuck Schumer on its board, its approach announces its ideological allegiances. The group strongly advocates liberal democracy, aggressively promoted by the United States, as the antidote to Middle Eastern terrorism. That is, the group trumpets the Bush doctrine.

The Bush doctrine, and its neoconservative supporters, have always had one indisputable virtue: clarity, marked by crystalline goals and a coherent playbook. This clarity gave them an enormous rhetorical advantage in making the case for war in Iraq, a case that May and FDD helped articulate. Now, Iran has forced itself to the fore of the foreign policy agenda with its furtive pursuit of nuclear weapons and often dismissive attitude toward the diplomats trying to keep the country in the nonproliferation shed. By all measures, the Bush doctrine should fit snugly onto Iran—the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism on a quest for weapons of mass destruction, a country where the masses demonstrably yearn to breathe free.

But, when I called May to learn his policy prescription for Iran, he provided a surprising answer, one that I soon found echoed that of many other Bush doctrine adherents. "I've got no sense of where this should ultimately go. Everybody is studying this, but I'm honestly trying to understand this myself and come up with my position," he told me. "This is complicated stuff." Not at all what we've come to expect from the neocons.

From Bosnia to Iraq, polarization has been a defining feature of post-cold-war foreign policy debates. But the Iran debate doesn't just trace traditional faults between realists and neoconservative hardliners. In this instance, the neocons can't come to a consensus among themselves. *The Weekly Standard*'s editorialists, for instance, have remained silent on the subject. And neocons who have taken positions don't agree. Institutions that played a large role in making Saddam Hussein a top foreign policy concern, such as AEI and the Project for a New American Century, are split over how to proceed. The Committee on the Present Danger, a coalition of cold war intellectuals that recently reassembled to promote hard-line foreign policy, has heatedly debated a proposed white paper on Iran. Even two of the most prominent hawks in the administration aren't on the same page. In November, Under Secretary of State John Bolton spoke at a Washington confab hosted by the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs. When asked about the prospect of preemptive military strikes against Iranian nuclear facilities, he replied, "No options are off the table"—and then smiled broadly. Across the country in San Francisco, at almost the same time as Bolton's revelatory grin, Under Secretary of Defense Douglas Feith fielded the very same question but described strikes as "not a sensible option."

In part, the lack of neocon consensus can be attributed to the nature of the problem. Nobody—not the Council on Foreign Relations, not John Kerry's brain trust—has designed a plausible policy to walk Iran back from the nuclear brink. Or, as Kenneth M. Pollack concludes in his new book, *The Persian Puzzle*, this is a "problem from Hell" with no good solution. But the muted, muddled response of neocons is also indicative of a deep divide within the doctrine.

Over the last four years, no entry in the political dictionary has been as overused and abused as "neoconservative." On editorial pages and blogs, the term's definition has stretched to indiscriminately include pretty much every believer in a hawkish foreign policy. But, just because the term has suffered these distortions doesn't mean that it should be discarded. It describes a distinct subset of the right. During the 1990s, a group of out-of-power intellectu-

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TNR/ The Issues • Policy Memo

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ENHANCED BUSINESS REPORTING GETS A START

A key reform of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act was the creation of the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board — a five-member nongovernmental organization with authority to make rules for the auditing of financial statements. In setting up this nongovernmental organization to oversee the auditing function of accounting firms, Congress clearly believed that its regulations and examinations would make the financial statements of public companies — prepared under Generally Accepted Accounting Principles — more accurate, and thus increase the quality of financial information available to investors.

What Congress apparently did not know was that, during the last 20 years — because of significant changes in the U.S. economy — the value of GAAP as a system of financial disclosure for investors has been declining. The accounting profession recognized this, however, and beginning in the late 1980s began to consider appropriate responses.

In 1990, after three years of deliberation, a special committee sponsored by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants noted the development of an information economy in the United States and declared that "continuing the present course, we believe, will lead to the growing irrelevance of conventional financial reporting in the new age of information."

As discussed below, the transformation of the U.S. economy from one dominated by the production of goods to one in which information and knowledge are the sources of value creation has had a profound influence on the usefulness of GAAP for financial disclosure.

THE AUTHOR

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It is a remarkable testament to the lack of communication between government and the private sector that, more than 10 years later, Congress could plunge ahead with an "improvement" to a system of financial disclosure that accountants themselves considered out of date a decade earlier.

GAAP INCREASINGLY IRRELEVANT FOR ASSESSING COMPANIES

GAAP accounting is increasingly irrelevant for financial disclosure because it was developed to describe a wholly different economy with a wholly different method of value creation. Developed and systematized during the early 20th century, GAAP accounting was designed to reveal important information about the companies —railroads, automobile makers and manufacturing enterprises of all kinds — that at that time dominated the U.S. economy. These companies acquired their productive assets in the market, purchasing plant, machinery, equipment, rolling stock and other units of production from suppliers. The costs of these assets were recorded on balance sheets and depreciated over time as they were used to generate revenues. Balance sheet values thus roughly reflected the cost of replacing the company as a whole, and the company's earnings — after depreciation of its productive assets — reflected the costs of producing the goods and services that were responsible for its revenues.

But change was coming. With the development of efficient manufacturing in new economies around the world, economic principles such as comparative advantage began to move the U.S. economy toward higher value activities. The creation of value through muscle and machinery began to give way to the creation of value through intellectual effort and the effective use of knowledge and information. This was the advent of what has been called the Post-Industrial Age, the Information Age or the Knowledge Economy, a change as profound as the Industrial Revolution in 18th century Great Britain.

To generate revenues in this new era, companies began to rely less on tangible productive assets purchased from others and more on internally generated *intangible* assets. These included computer software that was created by their employees, but also such items as pharmaceutical designs, clothing designs, brand names, contractual relationships with suppliers and distributors, employee skills and know-how, and employee and customer loyalty.

All of these became important assets to companies that were either selling knowledge and information itself or selling products that derived substantial portions of their value from intangibles such as knowledge, reputation and superior design or service.

The increasing importance of intangible assets had a profound effect on both the balance sheet and market values of

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public companies. As New York University Professor Baruch Lev has pointed out, the ratio between the balance sheet equity and market value of companies in the S&P 500 Index hovered around 1-to-1 in the 1977–1983 period (when goods manufacturing still dominated the U.S. economy), rose to 3-to-1 in the 1993–1995 period (as the knowledge economy began to take hold) and increased to 6-to-1 by 2001 (as intangible assets and intellectual property came to dominate the economy).

Although, as Lev has noted, some of this disparity is attributable to the high stock prices during the late 1990s and early 2000s, it is clear that during this 20-year period something happened that broke the connection between the depreciated cost of a company's assets and the company's market value. That something was the presence of intangible assets that did not make it to company balance sheets under GAAP accounting but was still a major source of company profitability.

WHY GAAP CAN'T COPE WITH INTANGIBLE ASSETS

America Online provides an illustration of this process. During the mid-1990s, AOL sent out vast numbers of computer disks intended to encourage recipients to try AOL's system and ultimately to become members of its online service. As the company began to grow, its greatest asset was the customer or member list that it developed through its massive disk mailings. Not only did a large number of members increase the company's revenues through the payment of fees for connecting to its servers, but advertisers were willing to pay for the opportunity to contact AOL members through AOL's website.

Apart from its members, the rest of the company consisted of its headquarters, a large number of computer servers, and a lot of rented telephone lines. But if AOL's membership or customer list was its most important asset, it was nowhere to be found on AOL's balance sheet. AOL was and is an example of a company that was generating revenues through the exploitation of an intangible asset—its membership list—that was not on its balance sheet at all.

Why AOL's most important revenue-generating asset was not on its balance sheet illustrates a defect in GAAP accounting for companies that earn their profits through the use of intangible assets. AOL incurred substantial costs in sending out computer disks.

In one sense, this was an investment, since it was creating a productive asset, but under GAAP promotional expenses of this kind must be written off as incurred. This is because GAAP accounting is based on cost. The items that are added to the balance sheet as productive assets, like machinery and equipment, have generally been purchased at a defined cost and presumably could be resold for that amount less depreciation. Depreciating these assets places revenues and expenses in the same accounting period and allows the computation of profit.

"THE INCREASING IMPORTANCE OF INTANGIBLE ASSETS HAD A PROFOUND EFFECT ON BOTH THE BALANCE SHEET AND MARKET VALUES OF PUBLIC COMPANIES."

However, when AOL attempted to treat its promotional expenses as an investment, it was slapped down by the Securities and Exchange Commission. When an expense is treated as an investment, it is capitalized — i.e., placed on the company's balance sheet as an asset rather than written off as incurred. Because expenses treated as investments are not written off against revenues, this has the effect of increasing reported profits, and in AOL's case this treatment showed operating profits where conventional accounting principles — where promotional expenses are written off — would have shown operating losses.

Accordingly, in 1997 the SEC forced AOL to change its accounting method to the format required by conventional GAAP. The company was required to write off all its promotional expenses in the years in which they were incurred, and to restate three prior years of its financial statements; it also was required to pay a substantial civil fine.

The SEC's insistence on conventional GAAP accounting was certainly not wrong; promotional expenses cannot be considered investments because their value is too speculative. Allowing companies to treat promotional expenses and other operating costs as investments, and hence assets, would be a license to enhance profits. In addition, even assuming that promotional expenses could be capitalized, there is no known way to establish their value for purposes of depreciation.

Depreciation of an asset implies that it has a value to someone else that is roughly equivalent to its value to the company that holds it, and that the asset could be sold or replaced for roughly the value at which it is carried on that company's balance sheet. But unlike machinery and equipment, promotional expenses can have real values that are much higher or lower than their cost. The same is true of salaries for the programmers, designers and scientists who develop the knowledge-based products that modern companies now sell. It might cost $5 million in employee salaries to create a drug or a computer program, but the product may be worth many times this cost, or may in the end have no value at all.

As a result, GAAP accounting — consistent with its birth in the era of tangible productive assets — requires that the balance sheets of companies that use intangible assets such as employee skills or promotional expenses not reflect many of the assets that account for their profitability.

Some might argue that this does not matter anyway. It is not the balance sheet value of a company that is important, but

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its GAAP earnings — and specifically its earnings per share (EPS). However, as the preceding discussion shows, the value of the EPS computation under GAAP depends heavily on bringing into the same accounting period the revenues and the expenses associated with generating those revenues. The failure of GAAP in this case is again illustrated by the AOL example. If we assume that the promotional costs associated with the generation of AOL's membership list were incurred and written off (as required by GAAP) in 1995, most of the revenues and associated profits that resulted from these expenses would be realized in later years.

Unlike the classic industrial company, in which depreciation of its productive assets places expenses and revenues in the same accounting period, AOL's revenues in later years would not be burdened by depreciation. In other words, the losses that it recorded in earlier years when it was sending out disks would have reduced the earnings in those years, but would result in higher earnings in later years when the benefit of those expenses would be reaped.

This process, repeated in many ways for the different kinds of knowledge companies that produce revenues from internally generated assets, substantially reduces the effectiveness of GAAP accounting as a means of financial disclosure. EPS becomes highly subject to manipulation, as the gap grows wider between the time the expense was incurred and the time the associated revenue was generated. This problem, recognized by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants report in 1990, continues to plague GAAP accounting today.

Therefore, for knowledge companies that rely on internally generated productive assets, there is simply no way to improve the accuracy of GAAP financial statements through better auditing. And knowledge companies are not a small part of the U.S. economy; it has been estimated, for example, that 80 percent of the value of the companies in the S&P 500 is represented by their intangible assets.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

For this reason, the accounting profession and accounting theorists have been calling for years for the development of a system of supplementary information that would enable investors to understand more fully the intrinsic value of companies that can no longer be usefully assessed by looking at their financial reports.

These efforts have now jelled to the point of a name for this supplementary data: "key performance indicators" — metrics that will reveal information about the current value and future prospects of companies that generate their revenues largely through use of intangible assets.

"KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS ... VARY FROM INDUSTRY TO INDUSTRY. THEY MUST BE DEVELOPED BY THE COMPANIES THEMSELVES ... AND THIS WILL REQUIRE EXTENSIVE DISCUSSIONS AND WIDESPREAD AGREEMENT ON PRECISE DEFINITIONS."

To be sure, many key performance indicators are commonly used in financial reporting, but these are only of modest value to investors because they are not well defined. Examples are same-store sales for retailers, consumer Web site visits for online companies, and research and development expenditures for technology or pharmaceutical companies.

To be valuable to investors, these and many other indicators would have to be rigorously defined, used by virtually all industry members, issued for consistent accounting periods and published regularly over a period of years. Many other indicators — often used by management but not commonly disclosed by companies — could reveal important information about company productivity, the skills of employees or the quality of products. These include reject-rates for products; patents obtained annually and related aging of patents in force; customer satisfaction; employee or customer loyalty; and product development lead-time. Of course, key performance indicators would vary from industry to industry. They must be developed by the companies themselves — by the managements that understand the principal drivers of value for their respective industries and the best ways to measure and report them — and this will require extensive discussions and widespread agreement on precise definitions.

Although the task will not be easy, it also is not unprecedented. For many years, under the leadership of the accounting industry, industry groups have been meeting to define the terms necessary to report their financial and nonfinancial results in the format required by a new computer language called Extensible Markup Language (XML). When adapted for use in accounting, XML is called Extensible Business Reporting Language, or XBRL. The unique element of XML and XBRL is the ability to tag individual concepts (text or numbers) with context so financial reports, available over the Internet or elsewhere, can be searched quickly and accurately. For example, the word "bank" can refer to a financial institution, the side of a river or what an airplane does when it begins a turn. XML permits each of these words to be given a tag that will signal to a search engine exactly which meaning the word has in the context in which it is used.

In accounting, this means that companies can prepare their financial statements any way they want. They can call the top line of their income statements sales, revenues, turnover or anything else, but when reported in XBRL format each of these terms will be given a specific tag identified with a specific definition for that term within the income statement.

As a result, when reports are prepared in XBRL, it will be possible for analysts, by computer, to extract in seconds the

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relevant comparative information about a number of companies without having to download the information in hard copy, find the relevant data in differently organized financial statements and input this data into their financial models by hand. This will make analyzing individual companies substantially easier than it is today.

The definitional work has now been done for so many industries that the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. has required bank call reports to be filed in XBRL format, and the SEC is considering whether to require all public companies to use XBRL in filing their financial and other required disclosures with the SEC.

Clearly, it is easier to define the 3,000 or so terms used in financial statements than to agree on and precisely define the underlying elements of the key performance indicators for every industry. But the experience with XBRL shows that it is possible to marshal the resources of companies and industries when the advantages of reaching an agreement are clear.

The trouble is that the advantages of a better system of business and financial disclosure are a lot clearer to investors, investment analysts, accountants and accounting theorists than they are to company managements. Over the long run, of course, better disclosure reduces investors' risks, lowers the risk that investors regularly build into share prices, and thus lowers capital costs. But these long-run considerations are not strong motivators for managements that are focused on day-to-day concerns. As a result, the need to spend the time and effort to create key performance indicators is a hard sell to the very group that must define and develop them.

A great deal of educational work is necessary here. Studies have shown, for example, that better disclosure increases share prices, which should be much in the interests of corporate managements. But much more than this is necessary. So, under the initial sponsorship of the AICPA, a group is forming that will attempt to demonstrate to corporate managements that the creation and disclosure of key performance indicators is in their long-run interest. Called the Enhanced Business Reporting Consortium, the group will ultimately consist of companies, business associations, institutional investors and specialists in accounting and investment analysis.

It has already enlisted the support of Microsoft, the Business Roundtable, the National Association of Corporate Directors and the AICPA. Its advisory committee includes several people prominent in the world of public policy and finance, including Paul Volcker (former chairman of the Federal Reserve Board), Roderick M. Hills (former chairman of the SEC), David Walker (comptroller general of the United States), Ned Regan (president of Baruch College) and Norman R. Augustine, former chairman and CEO of Lockheed Martin.

"DEVELOPING KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR EVERY SIGNIFICANT INDUSTRY WILL BE A HUGE AND LONG-TERM UNDERTAKING. BUT AS DIFFICULT AS IT WILL BE, THERE IS REALLY NO ALTERNATIVE."

Their first and most difficult task will be to persuade corporate America that a more relevant and transparent system of financial and nonfinancial disclosure will help investors better assess the value of companies in the knowledge economy, and that this in turn will help companies create value for their shareholders.

This is the positive side of EBRC's argument. But it also has another arrow in its quiver — the history of government action when the free market and voluntary action fail to solve a problem. In this case, as shown by the Sarbanes-Oxley Act, the government often steps in with a ham-handed solution that may address the issue in principle or appearance but often simply imposes unnecessary costs. Few corporate managements are happy with the reforms imposed by the act, yet the act appealed to legislators and regulators because it seemed at the time that the private sector offered no solution to the problem of management manipulation of financial results. Similarly, as it becomes clearer to investors and other corporate stakeholders that GAAP financial reports are unable to capture the value of intangible assets, pressure will build for a legislative or regulatory solution. When that solution comes, it will be imposed from the top and will have all the deficiencies that top-down regulation implies. It is far better, EBRC will argue, for the U.S. business community to begin now the development of the key performance indicators that will be necessary for financial reporting in the future.

The success of XBRL shows that this kind of industry-wide cooperative effort can succeed. Clearly, developing key performance indicators for every significant industry will be a huge and long-term undertaking. But as difficult as it will be, there is really no alternative.

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als gathered in a cluster of Washington institutions—think tanks like AEI, magazines like the *Standard*—where they produced articles and anthologies proposing a new post-cold-war course for U.S. foreign policy, a course that included regime change in Iraq, a tougher attitude toward China, opposition to the emerging international legal system, and, above all, a more robust deployment of U.S. power. They weren't battling just the Clintonites' liberal internationalism, but also devotees of Pat Buchanan's isolationism and Brent Scowcroft's realism. Many denizens of these institutions proudly identified themselves as neoconservative.

All their apparent agreement on the great issues of the day, however, obscured important internal disagreements and inconsistencies. The neoconservative mind has always had two lobes. One side drives neocons toward idealistic language about America's ability to spread human rights and democracy. This is the half that dominates the thinking of Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and the president's senior Middle East adviser, Elliot Abrams. In a speech to the National Endowment for Democracy in 2003, President Bush provided the *locus classicus* of this strain when he announced his "forward strategy of freedom in the Middle East" and called for a "global democratic revolution." The colder, more analytic lobe of the neocon brain endorses all this talk about democracy. But it couches these goals in a more realist context. It doesn't want democracy planted out of altruism. It wants democracy planted when it can promote U.S. interests. Charles Krauthammer and Jeanne Kirkpatrick have been the most prominent spokespeople for this lobe. Many of these neocons, such as Krauthammer, scoffed at the Balkan interventions as social work. And they don't mind temporary alliances with dictatorships and nasty regimes. "We often need such dictators to win the larger struggle against a global threat to liberty," Krauthammer wrote two years ago in *Time*, defending the U.S. partnership with Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf.

If you were to peer into the minds—or at least the writings—of most rank-and-file neocons, you'd find that the idealist and realist sides co-exist in almost equal proportion. Iran, however, brings these two lobes into conflict. Each policy option that might promote democracy comes at the expense of neocon goals for U.S. security. Each policy that might promote security comes at the expense of their liberal concerns. Iraq, it turns out, was not the first in a series of bold ventures toward a new Pax Americana, as both neoconservatives and their detractors imagined, but an anomaly—a freak instance in which events conspired to produce the clarity that could temporarily bridge the two halves of the neocon brain. In Iran, no policy can bring the neocons' competing goals into concert. The result is the current paralysis, a moment of indecision that exposes limits of neoconservatism.

On paper, of course, neocons have been far from muddled in their pronouncements about Iran. In January 2002, Bush famously placed the country in the axis of evil. The following year, neocons celebrated the U.S. victory in Iraq by issuing ominous warnings to the mullahs in Tehran. William Kristol, editor of the *The Weekly Standard*, announced, "The next great battle—not, we hope, a military battle—will be for Iran." A *Standard* essay by Max Boot, author of *The Savage Wars of Peace*, outlined a course the Iranians could follow "to avoid a visit from the 3rd Infantry Division"—a few basic steps that included quitting their pursuit of weapons of mass destruction.

In practice, however, the Bush administration shunned such sentiments. First in Afghanistan, then in Iraq, the U.S. government quietly courted the Iranians, trying to ensure that the mullahs didn't muck up its strategic objectives in Central Asia and the Middle East. Top American officials rewarded this cooperation with public praise. Describing Iran's role in the Afghan war, Richard Haass, then-director of the State Department policy planning staff, declared in 2001, "By and large, the Iranian role diplomatically has been quite constructive." And, in 2003, the United States acceded to Iranian demands and shut down the Washington office representing the political arm of the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK), an armed Marxist Islamist group that has long tormented the mullahs.

With American words and deeds so badly out of sync, the United States missed an unprecedented opportunity to steer events in Iran. "I've never seen the [Tehran] regime as vulnerable as before the Iraq war," says the Hoover Institution's Abbas Milani, "and never seen it as consolidated as today." The regime suffered through bursts of protest in 2002 and 2003. At the same time that it faced opposition in the street, the regime faced a far milder brand of opposition in the *Majilis*, the parliament, where a reformist movement had flourished since Mohammad Reza Khatami took over the presidency in 1997. But, this January, the mullahs set about eviscerating this movement. A month before the *Majilis* elections, they disqualified about 2,500 candidates and barred 87 sitting members of parliament, including Khatami's brother, from seeking reelection. At the same time, the regime worked to shore up its future with another bold maneuver. Using revenue from high oil prices and digesting knowledge bought off the Pakistanis, it sped up its nuclear program.

During this period, the Bush administration could have brought its rhetoric and policy into agreement. Before the Iraq war or just after, it could have leveraged the vulnerability of the Iranian regime, not to mention the presence of American troops on the country's eastern and western borders, to pursue a policy of either engagement or aggressive confrontation. Had the administration vigorously pursued one or the other during this window of opportunity, it might have succeeded in transforming Iran. Instead, it chose neither path, leaving nuclear negotiations to the Europeans while voicing few complaints about the mullahs' political repression. It is typical for hawks to blame the State Department for our inchoate attitude toward the Iranians. But the neocons were complicit in this. With their own divided

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minds, they didn't have a clear alternative to push. So they joined with their intramural adversaries, and, in Pollack's words, "simply deferred the issue altogether."

THANKS TO THIS inaction, the situation has now reached a crisis point. Although nobody knows when the Iranians will have enriched enough uranium for a bomb, everybody agrees there's little time to stop them. Neoconservative doctrine holds that the best long-term hope for preventing a nuclear Iran is the country's liberalization. Indeed, that's the policy proposed by one school of hawks. They don't want to follow the Iraqi example, using the U.S. military to impose democracy. The robustness of Iran's army and the ruggedness of its topography make it too difficult for that. Instead, these neocons argue that, despite the regime's crackdowns, Iran smolders in a prerevolutionary state. A bit of funding for opposition groups and encouragement from the U.S. government, conveyed in radio broadcasts and forthright presidential addresses to the Iranian people, could inspire the masses to rise up. Michael Ledeen, a former Reagan administration official, is the architect of this argument. Earlier this fall, he wrote in *National Review Online*, "In Iran today, upwards of 70 percent of the population is openly hostile to the regime, vocally desirous of freedom and democracy, and bravely supportive of the Bush Doctrine to bring democratic revolution to the entire region. If we could bring down the Soviet Empire by inspiring and supporting a small percentage of the people, surely the chances of successful revolution in Iran are more likely. By orders of magnitude."

But neocons haven't rallied around this regime-change recipe for a reason. While it satisfies the idealistic half of the neocon brain, it leaves the other half nervous and wanting. Above all, many neocons believe that promoting regime change will not stop Iran from getting the bomb. For starters, very few of them share Ledeen's assessment of the regime's health. AEI's Reuel Marc Gerecht, a former CIA specialist, told me, "The Iranian clerical regime has deep roots." Or, as Gary Schmitt of the Project for the New American Century bluntly states, "You're confronted by the fact that the reformers and democrats are stuffed." Then there's the disheartening fact that the U.S. government has no obvious democratic opposition groups on which to shower money and support. While neocons unanimously want greater funding for Los Angeles–based TV networks that beam into Iran, they bemoan the paucity of other options. "There's nothing like the Iraqi National Congress to unite people behind and fund," one Iran hawk laments.

Even if regime change were possible, what happens if it doesn't transpire quickly enough? If the mullahs are able to build nuclear weapons, they will be able to buy themselves an even longer lease on life. Gerecht points out that Iranians have openly contrasted the fates of Kim Jong Il and Saddam, their cohorts in the axis of evil. They have noticed that the dictator with the bomb escaped unscathed, living comfortably behind a nuclear cordon sanitaire. What's more, the mullahs have hinted that they have big plans for their nuclear-protected regime. Sirus Naseri, a trusted regime official who negotiated last month's deal with the Europeans to suspend Iran's uranium-enrichment activities, has said, "We face a crisis. Once we get over this crisis, we can resume what we were hoping to do." Some analysts have found ominous overtones in this cryptic message. With the confidence that it can deter U.S. interference, the mullahs could un-self-consciously finish the job of eliminating their domestic opposition once and for all.

Finally, though neocons argue that democratic regimes are less dangerous, in Iran, the democrats may be just as determined in their pursuit of the bomb as the mullahs. Aside from the MEK, which has been frequently compared to a cult, very few of the regime's opponents have openly criticized the nuclear program. "You have a failure of the opposition to engage the nuclear question," bemoans Hoover's Milani. In fact, even longtime opponents of the regime have defended Tehran's atomic ambitions. Ardeshir Zahedi, who served as a foreign minister under the Shah, argued earlier this year in *The Wall Street Journal* that there's nothing inherently wrong with an Iranian bomb: "A peaceful Iran with no ambitions to export an ideology or seek regional hegemony would be no more threatening than Britain, which also has a nuclear arsenal." And some longtime advocates of republican government in Iran have gone so far as to applaud the mullahs for protecting the country's sovereign right to develop a nuclear program. That's not to say that a democratic regime wouldn't be far more susceptible to diplomatic prodding than the less-than-rational theocrats. But the fact that the regime's hardened opponents have their own nuclear hopes makes regime change a less attractive solution to the current crisis—further contributing to the policy's paucity of support, even among the neocons who have waxed most Jeffersonian about the virtues of liberal democracy.

THE LESS IDEALISTIC side of the neocon mind has its own solution. As Gerecht argues, a preemptive strike against Iranian nuclear facilities is the "only option that offers a good chance of delaying Iran's production of nuclear weapons." This is a view also held by Krauthammer and Schmitt. The primary model for the operation is Israel's destruction of Iraq's Osirak nuclear plant in 1981. That attack did not destroy Saddam's nuclear program, but it arguably set it back many years. Unfortunately, the Israelis probably couldn't replicate their feat in Iran, at least not without U.S. help, because the country has such an extensive nuclear program. Besides, Israel would likely need permission to fly over Iraq—permission the U.S. government would have to grant. One neocon, who supports an attack, told me, "We'd get blamed for an Israeli attack, so why not just do it ourselves?"

There's an irony to this position. Gerecht has been one of the most vocal critics of the CIA, penning pieces decry-

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ing the "sorry state" of the agency. Of course, the efficacy of a strike depends entirely on accurately locating enough nuclear sites to make the venture worthwhile. Put another way, it requires reams of precise intelligence from the bureaucracy Gerecht has long decried. In fact, this reliance on the CIA, an organization that hawks have long battled, has turned some neocons off the option altogether. AEI's Tom Donnelly sarcastically quips, "They got Iraqi WMD so right."

Neocons like Donnelly have also argued that the Osirak parallel doesn't hold. Whereas Iraq in 1981 concentrated its nuclear activity, Iran has dispersed it throughout the country and hidden it well. "It's not a single facility you can take out. They've been very clever about hiding it," former CIA Director James Woolsey told me. So clever, in fact, that U.S. intelligence agencies have not uncovered much of it. Revelations, like the 2002 discovery of nuclear facilities in the towns of Arak and Natanz, have largely originated with the MEK, which has somehow managed to infiltrate Iranian ranks. Michael Eisenstadt of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, who has studied the preemptive option more carefully than anyone, concludes, "The Israeli raid on Osirak was a unique case, characterized by conditions that are unlikely to be replicated again elsewhere. Preventive action by the United States against Iran's nuclear program today would have to contend with intelligence, military-technical, and political challenges more daunting than those faced by Israel [in 1981]."

Even if a preemptive strike delivered the advertised security benefits, it would still harm the American vision for a democratic Middle East. Unlike Osirak, strikes against Iranian facilities would be far from clinical. The Iranians have reportedly submerged their nuclear workshops in densely populated areas like metropolitan Tehran, locales that guarantee civilian carnage. This carnage might be worth the price, except that it would likely cause the Iranian people to rally nationalistically around the mullahs, further postponing the regime's collapse. "We'd drive all those wonderful students and reformers and disgruntled clergy who are so ready to challenge the government into the mullahs' arms," Woolsey argues. Even supporters of strikes concede this backlash will occur. They just doubt that it will be long-lasting. Gerecht says, "You belittle the opposition by assuming that they will disappear. The constitutional movement goes back nearly a century. It will survive just fine." But, as critics of strikes counter, Iranian nationalism goes back further still. And, even in the current pro-Western climate, without bombs falling on their country, Iranian politicians occasionally squeeze considerable mileage out of anti-Americanism.

A preemptive strike could inadvertently undermine an even more profound neocon objective. "Iraq provides an ideal theater for Iran to exact revenge against us," argues the Council on Foreign Relations' Ray Takeyh. "They have one hundred thousand targets there." The Iranians, of course, have an extensive network of proxies and spies in the country. According to an important investigation by Edward T. Pound in *U.S. News & World Report*, U.S. intelligence believes this network has sponsored Ansar Al Islam, the group that has orchestrated the insurgency and planned terrorist attacks. The Iranians reportedly plotted to assassinate L. Paul Bremer, the former head of the Coalition Provisional Authority, and they issue a $500 bounty for each coalition soldier that insurgents kill. But all this trouble represents only a fraction of the problems the Iranians could cause if they wanted—for instance, in the relatively peaceful Shia south, where they could decisively crush any chance for success in Iraq by forcing the coalition to fight the insurgency on yet another bloody front. In other words, a preemptive strike against Iran would likely trigger a chain of events that would doom neoconservatism's grandest experiment.

To be sure, the neocons have rallied around one policy prescription: They want Iran's nuclear transgressions referred to the U.N. Security Council, where the United States can push the international community to collectively punish the mullahs. But that's not much of a solution, either. The United States can be reasonably sure that Russia and China will veto any sanctions against Iran. But this stopgap proposal is itself revealing. It is neocons who have pushed the debate in the direction of the much-loathed United Nations, a course they would only suggest in a state of confusion.

In all the public reconsideration of the Iraq war, neocons have barely wrestled with the implications of the invasion's failure for their worldview, content to blame the mess on errors of execution. The Iran debate, however, exposes as much as their writings on Iraq omit. For decades, a near-limitless belief in U.S. power has bridged neocon foreign policy thinking. That's why it is stunning to hear so many neocons ultimately express pessimism about the Bush administration's prospects for preventing the Iranian bomb. "The horse is ninety percent out of the barn," says Donnelly. "They're going to get the bomb unless we invade. That's not an option. So, I'd say, the time to stop this from happening has pretty much passed. Now, the question is, what are you going to do about it?"

And there's no surer sign that neoconservatism has been chastened than the manner in which neocons describe themselves when discussing Iran. Where many of them once unabashedly self-identified as members of an intellectual movement, they now deny that such a movement ever existed. They refer to neoconservatism in quotation marks, as if the term were merely a concoction of overactive left-wing imaginations. David Frum, a former Bush speechwriter, told me, "This really is an example of what academics call essentialism. Hostile critics invent this thing called neoconservatism that unfailingly favors unilateral military force. But, when the so-called 'neoconservatives' examine Iran and don't advocate the use of unilateral military force, the critics feel like a dirty trick has been played upon them." Denial may be the first step on the path to recovery. ■

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Mixed Blessings

TWENTY-FIVE HUNDRED YEARS ago, in *Agamemnon*, a Greek soldier just returned from the Trojan War described what it was like to be in that siege:

> We had to camp
> Close by the enemy's
> wall, in the wet
> river-meadows,
> Soaked with the dew and
> the mist, ill from the
> damp clothes, our hair
> Matted like savages.

A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT
(Warner Independent)

BAD EDUCATION
(Sony Pictures Classics)

Aeschylus might have been writing about the trench warfare of World War I. His lines depict the plight of the French troops in Jean-Pierre Jeunet's **A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT**, except that Aeschylus had not encountered artillery and machine guns. Jeunet's film—the large portions of it that are set in the trenches and in the too precisely named no-man's-land—ranks with *Paths of Glory* and *Gallipoli* in its re-creation of trench warfare, the animal existence between battles and the abattoir of the battles themselves.

At the start, in 1917, five French soldiers have been sentenced to death for various offenses. (A cliché of war films, the crucifix seen against a background of destruction, gets a sharp variation in Jeunet's opening shot.) We follow the five as they slosh through a trench to the officer who will sentence them. The sentence? They are to go over the top and attack the Germans on their own.

That sentence itself is a comment on what the troops are ordinarily commanded to do. What the five undergo and what others in later attacks undergo are part of a collage of faces in the mud and bayonets in the guts and noise that almost seems to enwrap them. Trench warfare becomes a homicidal game in which two teams face each other, taking turns at trying to hold the playing field. Jeunet, who wrote the screenplay with Guillaume Laurant, emphasizes the madness by, in the course of his story, returning to this battleground after the war. Now it does look like a weird playing field after the game—except that a farmer is beginning to turn the scarred ground.

Over the whole film lies a faint sepia tone, as if to place it in the past, and all of it is excellently made. But those war sequences—well, it would be hard to exaggerate the shock and the compassion with which Jeunet and his cinematographer, Bruno Delbonnel, have viewed them. Faces, wetness, holes that are havens, a German biplane with a crew of two (the rear man firing a machine gun backward because inventors hadn't yet learned how to fire through the propeller): these are only a few of the details worked into something more than realism. These war sequences are a blood-freezing memorial.

But—glum antithesis—Jeunet's film is a hybrid. The war is the steely filament on which a romance is hung. One of the condemned soldiers, Manech, has a fiancée named Mathilde. When she gets word of his sentence, she refuses to believe that he has been killed. Strengthened by the inner conviction that is essential to this sort of romance, she pursues every possible clue in order to find Manech. Add that Mathilde limps as a result of polio and the heart-tugs are even more pronounced. True, Jeunet handles this romance with finesse. Like all the best directors, he knows not only how to move his camera but how to move his actors interestingly within a shot. As Mathilde wends her wistful way, the cast becomes gigantic, and on each of the many characters Jeunet tries to stamp individuality. (There is a glimpse of Jodie Foster in a small role.) But this tale of Mathilde's search is a sentimentality dangling on the war's bleakness.

Matters are certainly not helped by Audrey Tautou, who plays Mathilde. Jeunet made the capricious *Amélie* with her, an attempt to present her as another Audrey Hepburn. This new film tries to transform her into someone like Lillian Gish in *The White Sister* or Janet Gaynor in *Seventh Heaven*. No. Tautou is a mobile mannequin, quite dull.

But what a loss it would be if the war scenes—a substantial part of the picture—were disregarded. Mathilde's story is well enough handled by Jeunet to be endurable, and the rest of the film is a reward.

The Spanish director Pedro Almodóvar, born in 1951, has reached the point in his career where he can no longer be considered an *enfant terrible* and, according to some, deserves retrospective celebration. The immediate cause is **BAD EDUCATION.**

If there is such a thing as a born filmmaker, Almodóvar surely is one. This was clear in his earliest films to be seen here, such as *What Have I Done to Deserve This?* and *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*. Since then, there has never been in his plentiful output a waver in control; and always there has been a sense that he was using film for his purposes, not merely making a picture. What has changed along the way is that, perforce, he is no longer an *enfant* and has become in pertinent ways less *terrible*.

In his first decade or so, Almodóvar slashed open the hypocritical guises of Spanish conventions, including some in religion, as if to make up for all the fakeries that had burdened thought and action under Franco. But, though no one would have expected or wanted him to continue always in the same vein, questions grew about his latter-day work. In place of the ruthless ridicule and scornful comedy of the early films, he began to invent intricate plots, sometimes so bizarre that they almost became sarcasm about plotting. Regarding *All About My Mother*, for instance, a summary of the story, which will not be attempted here,

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would sound like a satire of the story.

Bad Education suffers the same way. Basically it is about two young men, one a film director and the other an actor, who were schoolmates in a parochial school and who meet again professionally. In flashback we see their homoerotic attachment at school and their molestation by a priest. Yet to attack the censors of homoeroticism and the priestly abuse of boys is now not enough material for Almodóvar, as once it might have been. Now he has to set this account, told in the two time-planes of past and present, in a Pirandellian puzzle about reality. The actor has written a story about the pair's boyhood love, and the director films it; and matters are convoluted so that we have questions about which is the film and which is the actuality underneath it. This rigmarole degenerates into the pretentious.

Yet every scene is adroitly composed, every actor is more than competent. Gael García Bernal, the Che Guevara of *The Motorcycle Diaries*, is buoyant and supple as the actor, who, for plot reasons, is sometimes in drag. Fele Martínez is thoughtful and disturbed as the director, and Lluís Homar has depth as an abusive priest—who, by the by, leaves the priesthood and becomes a book editor particularly interested in young writers. Homosexual activities adorn the film and are no more or less welcome than the heterosexual activities in other current films.

But *Bad Education*, like much of Almodóvar's recent work, leaves the viewer with the sense of a writing-directing talent concocting complexities. Everything he touches is well-turned, but he now feels compelled to put the pieces together in something other than a lucid design. ■

ROBERT BRUSTEIN ON THEATER

The Rebirth of Political Theater

IT IS A TRUTH UNIVERSALLY ACknowledged that as a nation's politics grow more regressive, its arts tend to become more rambunctious. This is especially true in the theater. At the same time that the newly re-elected Bush administration is eliminating all traces of opposition from its Cabinet and its agencies, the volume of dissent is being turned up again on the American stage. Let us savor this precious privilege. An administration so eager for conformity in its inner circles will eventually try to impose it on the culture and the citizenry at large. Watch out for the increasing invocation of mantras like "loyalty," "patriotism," and "moral values."

THE GOD OF HELL
(Manhattan Ensemble Theater)

DEMOCRACY
(Brooks Atkinson)

Actually, since Vietnam thirty-five years ago, our stage has been permitted an unusual degree of freedom in questioning the conduct of our wars. Shedding the docility that characterized plays and movies during World War II and Korea, American playwrights—in the tradition of Aristophanes satirizing his own Peloponnesian wars—have had the unprecedented luxury of questioning overseas conflicts at the moment they are being waged.

Today, as a result of what many believe to be a misguided and deepening morass in Iraq, our theater is becoming political again. This season alone New York stages have featured *Guantanamo*, a British play about the rights abuses of Muslim detainees in Cuba; *Nine Parts of Desire*, Heather Raffo's intermittently powerful one-woman show about the plight of a variety of Iraqi women during the American occupation; *Dirty Tricks*, another one-woman show written by John Jeter about Martha Mitchell, the outspoken wife of Nixon's smarmy attorney general; *Trying*, Joanna McClelland Glass's recollection of her experience as secretary to Roosevelt's former attorney general, the aging Francis Biddle (portrayed with admirable crankiness by Fritz Weaver); and *Doubt*, John Patrick Shanley's shaded study of an Irish-Catholic priest who is suspected, perhaps falsely, of sexually abusing a young African American student, and relentlessly pursued by a tightly wimpled, tightly wound-up nun (Cherry Jones in a commanding performance meticulously directed by Doug Hughes). Still to arrive is David Hare's *Stuff Happens*, reportedly a seething indictment of our swaggering president and self-satisfied secretary of defense.

Not all of these plays are about Iraq, but almost all of them are about abuses of power. And Sam Shepard's **THE GOD OF HELL**, which opened recently for a brief run under the auspices of the Actors Studio Drama School at the Manhattan Ensemble Theater, is the first strong account of the rightward drift of our country under George W. Bush. Shepard, preoccupied of late with family dramas such as *Buried Child*, *The Curse of the Starving Class*, and his most recent work, *The Late Henry Moss*, has been galvanized by current events to write his most overtly political play since *States of Shock* (1991).

Like *States of Shock*, an implicit attack on the first Bush administration during the Persian Gulf war, *The God of Hell* is a metaphor for a whole nation on the cusp of cultural implosion. Shepard seems to be taking our temperature at the very hour that we are developing a fever. Indeed, *The God of War* is not only of the moment, it is the moment. It seems to have been written, in a white heat, the day before yesterday. That timeliness accounts for the play's strengths and its deficiencies. At best, which is to say throughout most of its length, *The God of Hell* is an extremely potent piece of surrealist paranoia about a nation dominated by moralism, patriotism, and secrecy. At its most hurried, which is to say as the action moves toward its climax, an imaginative metaphor degenerates into a familiar photograph, and what was implicit and suggestive becomes explicit and manifest. Despite this failing, I believe *The God of Hell* to be one of Shepard's most effective plays in years, and, thanks to a very gifted cast working under the unobtrusive direction of Lou Jacob, one of his best-acted.

The action is located in the heartland state of Wisconsin, the dairy capital of America. The setting is one of those

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Midwestern farmhouses familiar to us from *True West* and *A Fool for Love*, with its obligatory industrial shades, calico curtains, and shabby muslin drapes barely covering unwashed windows. Oiling his shoes by the wood stove and the flowerpots is Frank (Randy Quaid), a behemoth of a farmer, who breeds heifers. Bustling in the kitchen is his wife, Emma (J. Cameron-Smith), overfrying the bacon and over-watering the plants while she probes her husband about the unidentified friend of his who is staying in the basement. This mystery man turns out to be Haynes (Frank Wood), a frightened, vaguely lobotomized Milquetoast who is soon revealed to be an employee on the run from some initialized government agency ("DMDS ... SSCI ... something like that"). Eventually Haynes admits to having been contaminated by plutonium in a nuclear accident (hence the title, after Pluto, the Roman god of Hell), and proves it by leaving a luminous trail and emitting blue electric fizzes whenever he is touched. Haynes describes his condition as "static shock," which has left him dazed, panicked, and electrified, a walking open socket.

The catalyst of the drama is Welch (Tim Roth), a sinister figure with teeth like a shark and a smile that bites, who enters the house wearing a black suit and red, white, and blue lapel pin, carrying an attaché case. He is pretending to be a salesman peddling patriotic tchotchkes, including Pat Boone's recording of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" and cookies cut and decorated in the image of the American flag. Before long, having revealed his identity as a federal agent in pursuit of Haynes, whom he identifies as a "left-leaning" fugitive from a nuclear lab in Rocky Buttes, Welch is stapling plastic American flags over every surface in the house. Countering Haynes's assertions that Colorado is about "to be blown off the map," he concedes only "some minor leakage," adding, "We're in absolute command now. We don't have to answer to a soul."

The way Welch takes over the house, turning it into what he calls a "Think Tank" for the government, is the spine of the play. He drags Haynes up from the cellar by an electrical cord tied to his penis like Pozzo yanking Lucky around by a rope in *Waiting for Godot*, a black hood covering Haynes's face. Frank, having already undergone his own penile torture, reappears in the same black suit and lapel pin worn by Welch. Before long all three are in identical clothes, knocking over plants as they march out the door in unison, while Emma, a poignant figure of despair against a background of fizzing static shocks, desperately rings the cowbell to summon her husband back. And to summon us to share her alarm.

The play would have been more allusive without those obvious references to Abu Ghraib, and some of its language ("You didn't think you were going to get a free ride on the back of democracy forever, did you?") sounds excessively declarative. But Shepard is apparently willing to sacrifice the perfection of his art for the immediacy of his parable, and *The God of Hell* provides a genuine catharsis at a time when we can really use one. Dramatically, the sense of resident evil lurking in this Wisconsin house is worthy of the best of Pinter. And the Chaplinesque performance of Tim Roth—ominously cheerful, menacingly unctuous, every element of his body in slithering, rubbery motion—is a major lesson in the art of the stage. Let us pray the play is not an accurate prophecy of what is lurking in the wings.

If *The God of Hell* was written by a dramatic poet, **Democracy** (now playing at the Brooks Atkinson) is the work of a very accomplished journalist. Sam Shepard's play is a deep well; Michael Frayn's is a wide crater. Frayn's title suggests his ambition, which is to chronicle the tribulations of German democracy between 1969 and 1974 under the charismatic Socialist chancellor Willy Brandt. As Frayn proved earlier with *Noises Off* (a farce timed as perfectly as a Tiffany watch), he can be a master craftsman; as he proved later with *Copenhagen* (an extended dialogue between the physicists Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg), he has a gift for staging what would at first appear to be essentially undramatic material.

The price he pays in *Democracy* for cutting such a wide swath of history is a certain clunkiness. Characters are identified like trains coming into the station. ("Dr. Reinhard Wilke. My immediate superior. The dragon guarding Willy's door." "Genscher, Minister of the Interior. He's the one who's got to control the demonstrations.") And the play's "announcer," Günter Guillaume, a Communist sleeper in Brandt's government, is continually swiveling his head between his colleagues in Bonn and his espionage contact in East Germany, as if he were broadcasting a game of tennis instead of keeping his eye on the political ball. As befits such an overtly public play, Frayn creates a highly official atmosphere in which the various politicians spend most of the time facing the audience and delivering speeches in a telegraphic style. There are no women around to open up their private side, just a number of invisible female admirers who service Willy during his train trips. For a man who adapted Chekhov, Frayn has put surprisingly little emotional subtext into his script, at least in the first act. Nor does he show much interest in human motivation.

Still, the playwright has managed to draw at least two compelling characters: the endearing Willy Brandt, whose *Ostpolitik* policy of reconciling West and East Germany alternates with his Don Juanish efforts to swell Leperello's list; and the deceptive Günter Guillaume, who rose to become Brandt's personal assistant at the same time that he was betraying him to the East German Ministry of State Security (Stasi). Guillaume is Frayn's most complicated creation, a man who genuinely admired Brandt and had no desire to bring him down. Unlike Brandt, whom Frayn sees as an occasionally withdrawn, intermittently depressed man with a true social mission, Guillaume is split by conflicting motives and seems to have no dominating ideology. He is a little like Bosola in *The Duchess of Malfi*, a functionary who causes serious damage to another through spying and informing, but who is not above feeling pity for his victim.

Frayn has written a lengthy postscript to the published play. (Writing prefaces and postscripts is a habit that he learned from one of his models, Bernard Shaw. From his other model, Friedrich Schiller, he learned how to write history plays.) In it, the playwright speaks of Brandt as a complex individual, both strong and weak, friendly and aloof, modest and vain. His layered character is explained by the fact that he assumed a number of identities before turning to politics, "Willy Brandt" being only one of his pseudonyms (he was born Herbert Ernst Frahm). Imagine what Pirandello would have done with that! But while Brandt talks about his several skins, we never see him wearing them. Such personal complexities do not seem to interest Frayn as much as his hero's public per-

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sona. Brandt's most memorable moments in the play are his silent kneel at the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising memorial and his success at achieving the rapprochement he envisioned with the East German government.

Frayn is very deft at depicting the various intrigues driving Brandt's coalition government, often dependent for its survival on Christian Democrats and Liberals with entirely different political agendas. And his play works both as a spy thriller in the tradition of John le Carré, with the net closing on Guillaume, and as a history lesson based on prodigious research. Perhaps it is the historical aspect that makes *Democracy* sometimes sound like a well-written public lecture delivered by shop-window mannequins all wearing the same dark suits. Or perhaps it is Michael Blakemore's current Broadway production.

On a striking set by Peter J. Davison, consisting of two levels of white squares decorated with a variegated array of colored files, Blakemore has assembled a gifted group of American actors who somehow rarely break through the crust into areas of authenticity or surprise. Some of the supporting actors, notably Richard Masur as Horst Ehmke and Robert Prosky as Herbert Wehner, contribute adroit characterizations of world-weary politicians. But Richard Thomas as Guillaume, his tenor delivery largely unmodulated, has not quite shed his old role as John Boy in *The Waltons*. And James Naughton, who brought such galvanic charm to the materialistic lawyer Billy Flynn in *Chicago*, is a little too hamstrung by his leading-man looks, nimble grace, and mellifluous voice to enter fully the rumpled, chunky figure of Willy Brandt. He makes an honest try, though, and he has some effective moments, particularly in repose, when the full force of his depression becomes manifest.

Toward the end of the play, after Brandt's government has fallen and Guillaume has been imprisoned, with both men fatally ill, Frayn poignantly suggests the inseparability of the two characters. (Guillaume: "And wherever he goes, my shadow goes with him. Together still.") It is the best-written and most touching moment in a play that remains mostly on the surface of public events. But the director almost manages to ruin even this tender scene with a clumsy coup de théâtre as all the colored files fall out of their cabinets onto the floor.

Democracy, despite these cavils, is a substantial piece of work that is well worth a visit, if only to remind us of a time when political leaders were driven by humanitarian concerns rather than military and religious obsessions; and when the left was energized by the courage of its convictions. That time, like the events of this play, is history. ■

Gordon S. Wood
The Man Who Would Not Be King

HIS EXCELLENCY
GEORGE WASHINGTON
By Joseph J. Ellis
(Alfred A. Knopf, 320 pp., $26.95)

GILBERT STUART
(Metropolitan Museum of Art)

EVERYONE KEEPS WONDERING why over the past decade or so there have been so many books on the Founders, that remarkable generation of men who led the American Revolution and framed the Constitution. Joseph J. Ellis is surely one of the explanations: he has been a one-man historical machine. Beginning in 1993 with *Passionate Sage*, his book on John Adams in retirement, and the most sensitive and elegant of all his works, Ellis has produced two widely acclaimed books: one on Jefferson, *American Sphinx*, and another a collective portrait of the Founders, *Founding Brothers*. And now we have this new biography of George Washington, the latest in his character studies of the Founders.

All of these books, especially *American Sphinx* and *Founding Brothers*, have been best-sellers. Ellis has entered the ranks of that tiny group of popular historians, including David McCullough, Walter Isaacson, and Ron Chernow, who sell copies of their books in the tens and even hundreds of thousands. Unlike many of these popular historians, however, Ellis is a full-fledged scholar, a longtime professor of history at Mount Holyoke College.

It is unusual for academic historians to become popular historians. First of all, most academic historians do not write well enough to be easily accessible to a wide readership. Too much of their writing is turgid, jargon-ridden, and often filled with fashionable theories taken from other disciplines. So scholars of the early republic have borrowed the idea of "self-fashioning" from the literary critic Stephen Greenblatt, and the notion of a nation as an "imagined community" from the anthropologist Benedict Anderson, and the conception of the "public sphere" from the philosopher Jürgen Habermas. In the eyes of the academy these days, being able to pack all such theories into a single work is the mark of a real pro.

But ultimately it is not the quality of their prose or their use of theory that prevents most academic historians from becoming popular. It is, rather, the questions that they ask about the past, and the subjects that they write about. Most academic historians write for one another and carry on esoteric arguments within their own fields about subjects that they themselves have selected. Not that these subjects don't grow out of current concerns of our larger culture. The subjects that engage most academic historians are very much the product of contemporary issues—generally the liberal issues of race, women, sexuality, diversity, and cultural and social problems of various sorts. Yet these issues apparently are not the ones most Americans want to read about. Based on sales figures alone, it seems clear that most Americans want to read about the dead white males who created the nation—

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that is, the very subjects most academics do not want to write about.

POPULAR READERS ARE CERTAINly willing to accept criticism of the Founders—Ellis's character studies are not all celebratory—but they do not want the United States to be, as the late John Higham put it, merely "a villain in other people's stories." And in many of the histories of early America, unfortunately, that is precisely what the nation has become. Ellis may be exaggerating when he says that "the currently hegemonic narrative within the groves of academe [makes] Washington complicitous in creating a nation that was imperialistic, racist, elitist, and patriarchal," but he is not exaggerating by much. He is probably correct in declaring that "the reigning orthodoxy in the academy regards Washington as either a taboo or an inappropriate subject, and any aspiring doctoral candidate who declares an interest in, say, Washington's career as commander in chief, or president, has inadvertently confessed intellectual bankruptcy." I certainly know of at least one distinguished professor with a superb book on Alexander Hamilton who was told that writing about such a dead white male was a waste of time.

Young academic historians interested in the early decades of the newly created United States want to move "beyond the Founders," as the title of a new book on the era puts it. Many of the new works on the Founding era avoid old-fashioned political subjects such as parties, elections, and the origins of the nation, and instead focus on the social and cultural problems of race, women, Indians, and transnational identities and movements of peoples. Yet it is important to emphasize that works on these social and cultural subjects, however much they are written out of anger with middle America and however lacking in popular appeal, have greatly enriched our scholarly understanding of the early republic. Our knowledge of the Founding era would be seriously impoverished without the many recent monographic studies of slavery, women, Indians, and other subjects hitherto kept out of the national narrative. All this suggests that the advancement of professional historical scholarship usually transcends the motives of its participants.

Although most people may want to read popular biographies of the principal Founders, even those academic historians who focus on politics in the early republic understandably wish to write about something other than these famous individuals. Instead of a few prominent political leaders, they are interested in cultural politics: in the ways in which people, especially ordinary people, expressed themselves politically outside of organized parties—in parades, festivals, and rituals and symbols of all sorts. These historians wish to understand how the new nation and its institutions emerged not only from the top down but also from the bottom up, or even from the middle out. And another biography of Washington, who was, as Ellis says, "the deadest, whitest male in American history," does not meet these historians' needs at all.

BUT ELLIS IS NOT WRITING FOR his fellow scholars. Although he is quite willing to use their monographs for his own purposes, he is not really interested in engaging with their internal debates or in participating in their efforts to expand the boundaries of scholarship. He never mentions Greenblatt, Anderson, or Habermas. He is a popular historian, writing for educated readers in the general populace, and another biography of Washington, especially one as well-written as this book is, will meet those readers' needs quite admirably.

Readers who are familiar with the vast array of writings about Washington will not find much that is new or original in Ellis's book. But they will find his usual engaging style of writing. He has a wonderful knack for summing a mass of complicated material in a few pithy sentences. With Ellis, it is not so much what is said as how it is said. His writing is forthright and directed at the reader in the "manly tone" that Hamilton sometimes used; it is always clear, confident, colloquial, even at times conversational. ("Questioning Washington's judgment, and implicitly his unique authority, was akin to purchasing a one-way ticket to the sidelines.") And it is tinctured with just the right amount of Ellis's peculiar humor. ("Standing calmly at attention while the man abreast of you is disemboweled by a cannon ball is an acquired skill and not a natural act.")

Like Ellis's other character studies of the Founders, this one is modest in length, all the better to capture the hordes at Borders. The book that Ellis hopes to displace is Marcus Cunliffe's little gem *George Washington: Man and Monument*, now nearly fifty years old and still in print. Cunliffe's book is short, only 150 pages, and it is very readable. Although the scholarly community at first ignored it—it has no footnotes and too much interpretation at the expense of narration—Cunliffe's study of Washington actually launched what has become a veritable genre of history writing, one that Ellis has exploited superbly: short and interpretative essay-like books on the character of the Founders.

Although Ellis gives Cunliffe's little book a special salute in his preface, he thinks a new short biography is needed. He believes, correctly, that we know much more now about the context of Washington's life than we knew in the 1950s, when Cunliffe wrote. We know much more about the ideology of the Revolution, the social and economic forces at work in plantation Virginia, the incompatible versions of the spirit of 1776 that exploded into partisan political warfare in the 1790s, the fate of the Indians, and—most important—the issue of slavery.

ELLIS HAS WRITTEN HIS SHORT biography neither to celebrate nor to denigrate Washington. He wanted to recover the man, not the monument, and in this he has succeeded beautifully. Washington emerges as a thoroughly human character, without losing his stature as a great man. Not everyone agrees, though: the distinguished historian David Hackett Fischer has criticized Ellis's new book for diminishing Washington's heroic greatness while trying to explain that greatness. According to Fischer, Ellis has attempted a psychological study of Washington that stresses "a dark flaw or deep conflict" in the man which undermines his reputation for honesty, dignity, and virtue. Instead of being moved by ideals and devoted to the principles of the Revolution, Washington becomes, according to Fischer, a man (in Ellis's words) of "tumultuous passions," "aggressive instincts," "bottomless ambition," "personal avarice," and "a truly monumental ego with a massive personal agenda." According to Ellis, Washington "lost more battles than he won; indeed, he lost more battles than any victorious general in modern history." "Altogether," writes Fischer, "Ellis gives us the most negative interpretation of

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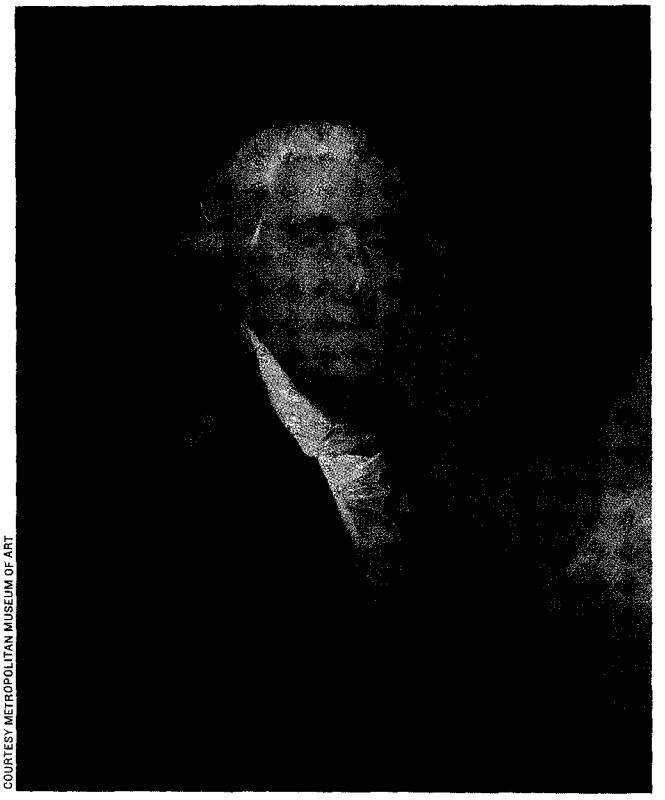
Washington's generalship since the debunkers of the 1930s."

This seems harsh and unfair. It is true that Ellis's characterization of Washington emphasizes all those psychological forces of ambition and avarice driving the man throughout his life. But Ellis also emphasizes Washington's control over his passions ("the most notorious model of self-control in all of American history"), his steadfastness, his acceptance of Whig and patriotic ideals, his wisdom, and his overall achievement in the creation of the American nation. Ellis's portrait of Washington thus humanizes the man without knocking him off the pedestal where his contemporaries placed him. This Washington is all the greater because he is a real human being with both passions and principles.

It is a mistake to set passions and principles in opposition to each other. They are not mutually exclusive. Washington may have been the most ambitious and acquisitive of the Founders, but he was at the same time the most disinterested and virtuous of this group of extraordinary men. Whatever may have been the underlying forces or emotions driving Washington's behavior, he had to explain, to justify, to legitimate, and to make sense of that behavior to himself, and to his fellow Americans, by invoking principles that he and they shared and could admire. And by doing so in terms of the highest republican ideals of the age, he limited, controlled, circumscribed, and even created that behavior. His surrendering of his sword to the Congress in 1783 and his retirement to Mount Vernon with a promise to engage in no further political activities electrified the world. ("The greatest exit in American history," Ellis calls it.) From Caesar to Marlborough, every victorious general in history had expected political rewards commensurate with his military achievements. But not Washington. His retirement made him immediately famous as a modern-day Cincinnatus. Although Washington knew very well the effect that his action would have, his behavior was no less commendable, and no less virtuous, for all that.

Washington as a young man was certainly ambitious and acquisitive. He sought to make a name for himself as a military man in the Ohio Country, and through his aggressive actions he almost singlehandedly precipitated what the American colonists called the French and Indian War and the Europeans the Seven Years' War. Although he nearly got himself killed in several military disasters, he nevertheless came out of the war unscathed and with his reputation as a military man enhanced. He took advantage of the British victory over the French and Indians by buying up land in the West, eventually acquiring nearly sixty thousand acres in the trans-Appalachian area. When the British refused to grant him the military commission that he pleaded for, he turned his ambitions and energies to building up his estates in order to become one of the dominant planters of Virginia. To that end he smothered whatever feelings he had for Sally Fairfax and married the rich widow Martha Dandridge Custis. "Her huge dowry," says Ellis, "immediately catapulted Washington into the top tier of Virginia's planter class and established the economic foundations for his second career as the master of Mount Vernon."



COURTESY METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

GILBERT STUART, *George Washington (The Gibbs-Channing-Avery Portrait)*

In the developing crisis between Britain and its colonies, writes Ellis, "constitutional niceties did not concern him." Washington was far more concerned with the restraints the British government was placing on the colonists' expansion to the West. Eventually, like most of the Revolutionary leaders, he came to detect a British conspiracy against American liberty. As "Virginia's most famous war hero," he was naturally selected by his fellow Virginians to go to the Second Continental Congress to fight. "When he departed Mount Vernon for Philadelphia on May 4, 1775," writes Ellis, "he took along his military uniform, both as a sign and a statement of his aggressive intentions." Although, as Ellis points out, Washington "had considerable trouble acknowledging his own ambitions," he was virtually destined to become commander-in-chief of the Continental Army.

The War for Independence, which Ellis points out was "the longest declared war in American history," became "the central event in Washington's life, the crucible for his development as a mature man, a prominent statesman, and a national hero." Ellis does not take us through each battle in detail; instead, he uses the battles and the war to illuminate Washington's character. Although Washington did lose most of his battles, he understood power and politics. He always deferred to the Congress and yet held the allegiance of his men through their defeats and their suffering. He came to appreciate that keeping his army intact was the secret to saving the country, thus reinforcing what Ellis calls "a central lesson of his life—survive and you shall succeed."

Washington's experience with the Continental Army made him a nationalist; it made him think about the United States as a whole. Only his anxiety over the failure of the union and all that he and his army had fought for accounts for his "genuinely grudging and truly tortured" break with his promise in 1783

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not to engage in public life again. His colleagues persuaded him to attend the Philadelphia Convention of 1787, of which he was immediately elected president, and then to stand for the presidency of the new national government created by the convention. In both cases, says Ellis, he did what he did best, "leading by listening" and projecting "otherworldly detachment—one of his best and favorite roles."

Ellis has no doubt about Washington's greatness as president; but that "achievement must be recovered before it can be appreciated, which means that we must recognize that there was no such thing as a viable American nation when he took office as president." No president has ever faced the circumstances Washington faced. Lincoln had to save the Union, but Washington had to create it. As he had in the War for Independence, says Ellis, he transformed "the improbable into the inevitable."

Realizing the fragility of the new nation, Washington backed a number of schemes for creating a stronger sense of nationhood. In the absence of long-existing feelings of nationalism in the 1790s, popular celebrations of Washington became a substitute for patriotism; indeed, commemorations of his birthday rivaled those of the Fourth of July. It is not too much to say that for many Americans he stood for the Union. As president he was always acutely sensitive to the varying interests of the country and fervent in his efforts to prevent the nation from fragmenting and falling apart. Washington undertook his two long royal-like tours of the country in 1789 and 1791, so as to bring the government to the farthest reaches of the land and to reinforce the loyalty of people who had never seen him. He promoted roads and canals and the post office—anything and everything that would bind the different states and sections together.

WASHINGTON ALSO UNDERstood the power of symbols, and he was willing to sit for long hours to have his portrait painted for the sake of the country's public spirit. The thirty-nine-year-old painter Gilbert Stuart grasped this point only too well. Stuart, though born in colonial America, spent most of his early adult years in Britain developing his peculiar skills as a portrait painter, or as he put it, "making faces." Shortly after returning to the United States in the mid-1790s, the ambitious Stuart hustled to Philadelphia with the express purpose of painting President Washington. He painted his first portrait of Washington some time in 1795 (it is known as the Vaughn portrait), and its success led to many more and numerous replicas of these. Copies of Stuart's unfinished Athenaeum portrait, done in 1796, dominated nineteenth-century America; it is the reversed image of the portrait that graces our dollar bills. Fourteen of Stuart's portraits of Washington are currently displayed in a major retrospective of nearly one hundred of the artist's portraits at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Although Stuart had a reputation for putting his subjects at ease in order to bring out their personalities, he had immense difficulty with Washington. During one troublesome sitting Stuart finally pleaded in exasperation, "Now sir you must let me forget that you are General Washington and that I am Stuart, the painter." Washington's reply chilled the air: "Mr. Stuart need never feel the need of forgetting who he is or who General Washington is." No wonder the portraits look stiff. Washington always used his natural reticence to reinforce his image as a stern and forbidding figure, the better to be a king-like patriarchal leader.

ALTHOUGH SOME AMERICANS in 1789 did desire to turn the presidency into a kind of elected monarchy, Washington resisted, and was relieved when senatorial efforts to give him an elaborate royal-sounding title failed. Yet he, like other high-toned Federalists, believed in a clearly established social hierarchy, and he was determined to make the presidency a respectable office. (He had initially favored "His High Mightiness, the President of the United States and Protector of Their Liberties" as a presidential title.) Consequently—and this is

The Want Room

I want to unshroud my desire
for desire now that I've plumbed midlife
where nothing nimbles the heart numbed.

So that the most I can do is long for longing, hanker
for rank hunger, thirst for raw thirst.
I want to kneel at the foot

of this desk, bed, life and pray
I can still pray for something.
That the blood and breath of this body

can still rise and pant for someone.
That even if it's taken all day to unfold
these few minutes accordioned in

before I snap on the body-
suit of Mother, the Goodly
Housewife at the sofa, the table, the range

that the Want Room will still open for me
with my blunted key: a yearning to turn
in the welter, crash through the soundproofed,

blind look unstuck. That I can crave time
for time, lust for lust, hope for
hoping I awaken each day and want

to want.

SHARON DOLIN

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something that Ellis tends not to emphasize enough—he often acted as if he were an elected king. In his public pronouncements he referred to himself in the third person, and like a British monarch speaking to Parliament from the throne, he chose to deliver his inaugural address personally to the Congress. He accepted the presence of royal-like iconography everywhere, and in his public appearances he rode in an elaborately ornamented coach drawn by six horses, attended by four servants in livery, followed by his official family in other coaches. He established excruciatingly formal levees in emulation of a royal court, and like the English kings he went on royal progresses through the country where he was welcomed by triumphal arches and ceremonies befitting a monarch. In fact, Washington was the only part of the new government that really caught the imagination of the American people, who after all had been reared in monarchy.

Since Ellis does not take Washington's monarch-like behavior as seriously as he might have, he cannot fully appreciate the mounting Republican opposition to the administration led by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. He pictures Jefferson as he did in his earlier work, a disingenuous pie-in-the-sky ideologue who was in love with France and who failed to comprehend the real interests of the United States, certainly not in the way the hard-headed and unsentimental Washington did. The Republican leaders were caught up in a "conspiratorial mentality" and full of "Jefferson-talk," which was "the kind of overheated and melodramatic depiction of the purported evil lurking in Washington's administration that passed for self-evident truths within Republican headquarters in Virginia."

Ellis's acute historical sense fails him here. He tends to judge the politics of the 1790s as if they were similar to the politics of our own time. So he accuses Jefferson and Madison of having "played politics with foreign policy during the debate over the Jay Treaty," as if these Republican opposition leaders, like politicians today, were simply looking for issues with which to embarrass the administration. But he describes the defenders of the administration no differently. In 1798, he says, "the Federalists were exploiting the anti-French hysteria in the same partisan fashion that the Republicans had exploited the pro-French hysteria during the debate over the Jay Treaty."

The politics of the 1790s were not exactly politics as usual, and we will never understand the passions of that tumultuous decade if we think otherwise. This is why Ellis has some problems explaining Washington's extraordinary behavior during the final years of the decade. In 1798, with much less of his earlier reluctance to abandon his retirement at Mount Vernon and do his duty, the old general buckled on his sword once again and made his way to Philadelphia to organize an army, numbering on paper in the tens of thousands, designed to resist what was thought to be an imminent French invasion. "Washington's blinkered response" to events in 1798 "becomes difficult to explain," says Ellis. Washington "should have known better"; he "should have sensed that something was awry at this moment." But he didn't know better, any more than others did, caught up as they were in the bewildering circumstances bred by this age of revolutions.

One issue that Ellis handles with consummate skill is Washington's agony over slavery. Washington came to his eventual rejection of slavery not only out of moral considerations but also out of economic ones. He concluded that slavery was economically inefficient and that people who were compelled to work would never work hard. With this issue, as with others, Ellis is at pains to emphasize Washington's aversion to idealistic and sentimental illusions. As with foreign policy, so with slavery: he preferred "rock-ribbed realism" to "any idealistic agenda that floated above the realities of power on the ground." But in his will he did free the slaves whom he owned outright. (Since he could not free his wife's dower slaves and he did not want to break up the intermingled families, his slaves' freedom was to take effect only upon the death of his wife.) He did this in the teeth of opposition from his relatives, his neighbors, and perhaps even Martha. It was a courageous act, and one of his greatest legacies. Yet in this act, too, Ellis detects mixed motives. "Doing the right thing for his slaves," he observes, "became imperative because it also meant doing the right thing for his historic reputation." Would that more of the Founders had this concern for posterity's judgment on the issue of slavery. ■

Glyn Maxwell

Beautiful as He Did It

ELECTED FRIENDS:
ROBERT FROST AND EDWARD THOMAS TO ONE ANOTHER
Edited and with an introduction by Matthew Spencer
(Handsel Books, 216 pp., $24)

I.

FOR TWO POETS, TWO FACIAL expressions. One is simple enough: the blankness with which I, as a graduate student, and every one of the thousand or so graduate students I have taught, first received the words "Edward Thomas." Since this is wrong, and dismaying, I try to have some fun with it. I tell them about a poet they need to know called Thomas, lyrical, fond of pubs, Welsh background, died too young, and I wait for the hands to shoot up like saplings and for the whole class to go not at all gently into that good night, via the Chelsea Hotel and the White Horse Tavern, at which point I say, "That's right, Edward Thomas," and watch the saplings dwindle and die. Then I get that look.

The other expression is more complex. The best way to grow it is to tell a group of bright postgraduates, up on Eliot, down with Derrida, already duking it out with Pound and Stevens and Olson and Ashbery, that we are going to learn some Robert Frost poems. And I get this polite smile, somewhere between amusement and bemusement, a smile that, as it becomes clear that I mean it, slowly hardens into a sort of half-grin, half-frown. It's as if I've asked them to bring in some colored paper next week, so we can make flowers.

Perhaps a similar sequence of expressions would have been observed at Frost's eighty-fifth birthday dinner in

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1959. Many of the guests were veterans of his seventy-fifth and sixty-fifth birthday dinners, and several more besides. Friends and relations and disciples and rivals presumably fastened on that smile again, at least until Lionel Trilling rose and described Frost as "a terrifying poet," an intervention that, at the time, seems to have puzzled or offended almost everyone present. And although many students—and indeed many poets—journey toward a full and serious appreciation of Frost's splendor and gravity, still they meet him in childhood as that old-time uncle on his farm, making sailboats out of wood, full of proverbs, quoting himself. They have miles of rural book jackets to get through before they come face to face with the terror in the midst of the trees. Such is the fate of a "national" poet. By the time his ninety-fifth birthday dinner comes around, he is marble, engraved, frozen, claimed by the populace, readers, non-readers, untouchable, alone. But he had been that for years.

How contrasting, then, are their reputations, Frost the giant, Thomas the rumor, and yet how akin in isolation. Frost is the only major poet to whom modernism can lay no rational claim, who came into his force almost in spite of the prevailing winds of the twentieth century. Thomas rustles in anthologies of the even less remembered Georgians—John Drinkwater, Lascelles Abercrombie—whom he only superficially resembles, or the "War Poets," where his pale surface is overshadowed by the lush dismay of Owen or the crisp fury of Sassoon. Since very few of his poems concern life on the front line, to describe him as a "War Poet" is simply to classify a poet by cause of death. Alcohol and suicide would merit schools and anthologies.

THE FACT IS, FROST AND Thomas, the former as famous as a poet can be, the latter—at least outside the British Isles—barely visible, resemble only each other. And while the modern or postmodern literary academy can do nothing about Frost's indestructible achievement, it can at least doggedly ignore the work of the reticent Welsh soldier who even in his prose, Frost believed, was writing poetry "as good as anybody alive."

The history is short, sweet, and sad. In August 1912, Frost, thirty-eight, unsuccessful, and his wife, Elinor, who dreams of "living under thatch," toss a coin in their kitchen in New Hampshire: "Heads England, tails Vancouver." In October 1913 in London, literary journalist Thomas, thirty-five, broke, depressed, excuses himself from a meeting with his friend Eleanor Farjeon because he has "an appointment of uncertain time with an American." Friendship follows, culminating in a series of marathon sun-blessed hikes through the countryside of western England in the antebellum "golden summer" of 1914. During that summer *North of Boston* is published in England, and Thomas—who has never written a poem—manages to review it for three different journals: "This is one of the most revolutionary books of modern times ... because [the poems] lack the exaggeration of rhetoric, and at first sight appear to lack the poetic intensity of which rhetoric is an imitation."

War breaks out. Thomas writes to Frost, "I am in it now & no mistake," but he means poetry. Frost has told him that he should try working his reams of prose about the countryside into blank verse. Thomas is astounded: "I find myself engrossed & conscious of a possible perfection as I never was in prose," he writes in December 1914. Two months later the Frosts are sailing back to safety in New England and Thomas is agonizing over whether to join up. The men—both now poets—correspond across the wartorn Atlantic. In July, Thomas enlists in the Artists' Rifles, and, for the first time, writes "Goodbye" at the end of a letter. But dozens of letters follow, chatty, mournful, funny, about friends, about the war, about Thomas's son Mervyn, who has sailed with the Frosts, about Thomas's army life, Frost's newfound celebrity. In February 1917, Frost thinks he might have found Edward an American publisher, but in March Corporal Thomas writes from the front: "I should like to be a poet, just as I should like to live, but I know as much about my chances in either case, & I don't really trouble about either." Then in April: "Things are closely impending now & will have happened before you get this." At dawn on Easter Monday 1917, a blast kills Thomas at the Battle of Arras.

A copy of *North of Boston* was found in Thomas's kitbag. Frost wrote his widow, Helen: "I want to tell him, what I think he liked to hear from me, that he was a poet.... It was beautiful as he did it." And the relationship was preserved in the verse, in Frost's "To E.T." and, by his own account, in "The Road Not Taken," in Thomas's poems "The sun used to shine" and "A Dream":

> ... So by the roar and hiss
> And by the mighty motion of the abyss
> I was bemused, that I forgot my friend
> And neither saw nor sought him till the end,
> When I awoke from waters unto men
> Saying: "I shall be here some day again."

THOMAS SAW ONLY SIX OF HIS poems published, and his reputation in Britain built slowly through the twentieth century, from non-existent to minor, while—not unlike Frost's—being rendered homely and unthreatening by traditionalists, who drew him lovingly into their corner, against the modern, against the new, against the current. "Adlestrop," a memorable little poem on the silence of a country railway station, is the Thomas equivalent of "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," much anthologized, much beloved—and so well known it can scarcely be heard. "Adlestrop" and Thomas himself spent much of the twentieth century in a familiar cloud of English nostalgia, for rhyme and the rural and the age of railways:

> The steam hissed. Someone cleared his throat.
> No one left and no one came
> On the bare platform. All I saw
> Was Adlestrop—only the name.

Edward Thomas, like England, needs rescue from the nostalgists.

For this reason, Handsel Books, which has recently published the collected poems of Thomas as well as these letters, has done English-language poetry a considerable service. And yet the letters make a curious volume. For one thing, they are weighted heavily in favor of Thomas: most of Frost's letters to him are gone. With Thomas's reviews of *North of Boston* included, this means we hear a great deal more from him than from Frost. Conversely, we spend a lot more time in Frost's shoes, as it were, or trying to extrapolate what he must have said to Thomas. For instance, Thomas writes: "Yes I quite see about using the 'naked tones,' not the mere words, of certain profoundly characteristic instinctive rhythms. And No, you don't bore me, only I feel a fraud in that

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I have unconsciously rather imitated your interest in the matter." Of course we know enough to guess what kind of thing Frost said, but trying to pin it down makes the reader feel like an old man whose memory is failing. The absence of most of Frost's contributions gives Thomas's letters a kind of false anxiety of abandonment: "I tell you I wish you were in Gloucestershire as God is ... or instead of him," he writes, as another one goes unanswered.

Michael Hofmann, in a graceful foreword to the book, has some play with how the relationship grows a phantom narrative, how Frost by default becomes the strong, silent type, Thomas the restless suitor ever needing reassurance. The friendship, even when we can read Frost's answers for ourselves, does resemble the habits of a romance, or at times an affair in danger of fatal imbalance. As Hofmann puts it, Frost's letters are less "*frisky*" than Thomas's. Thomas explains that he has not yet said more about *North of Boston* because of pure "disinclination to sprawl about before your eyes as I feel I should do." Several excited critiques from Thomas about a new Frost poem originally titled "Two Roads"—letters answered in reality but not answered here—do eventually receive this from Amherst: "Methinks thou strikest too hard in so small a matter. A tap would have settled my poem."

But the friendship suffers—literally—a sea change. Once Frost is back in New England and Thomas is in the army, the plans that were so nearly possible—that Thomas emigrate with his family, that he and Frost set up a "lecture-camp" in the New England woods—come to seem utopian and strange to Thomas: "It is no use me saying how much I wish I were destined to come & live at your farm. But ... I find myself thinking as if there wasn't going to be no future." When Frost suggests that Thomas—a year after the sinking of the *Lusitania*—come out to America for three weeks on the "fast boats," Thomas writes heavily: "We could not help smiling that you should think it possible." In late 1916, Frost sends Thomas a war poem ("France, France, I know not what is in my heart"), but it is rhetorical, shrill, worked up from newspaper cuttings. Thomas, in uniform, between miserable chores, writes carefully: "I like the poem very much, because it betrays exactly what you *would* say, and what you feel about saying so much."

And while Thomas's letters spiral to a shrug of desolation, Frost, who can know nothing of what his friend is seeing, reaches back into the brief spring of their relationship for some light: "Your letter shows you can still undertalk me when you like. A little vaccination and a little cold and you are down where it makes me dizzy to look in after you. You are so good at black talk that I believe your record will stand unbroken for years to come." These are the little digs of a profound friendship, but the two roads have diverged very far by now. When Frost believes he has found his friend an American publisher, one detects exasperation in his prediction of the likely response: "Get up no hopes—as I know you are incapable of getting up any." Then again, Thomas's publishing history rather supports his pessimism.

Edward Thomas
by Jack Coughlin for The New Republic

With the poetry elsewhere, and Frost's more developed writings on poetry elsewhere, the chief pleasures of this book are Thomas's sketches of life in England during the war, as his company drifts around the southern counties prior to leaving for France. The countryside is deserted, the air numb with the boredom of soldiers and the silence of farms and cottages braced for bad news. What had threatened for years has come to pass, but in the ancient villages of Kent and Sussex and Hampshire it registers as calm—"ate & drank (stout) by a fire at a big quiet inn—not a man to drink left in the village"—punctuated by the abysmal rumble of artillery from across the English Channel. For Thomas, for whom true happiness consisted in walking the countryside, about which he knew everything, the experience must have been almost as harrowing as what was to come in the hellfire of France, and his measured words feel clung to, a lifeline. He has been denied promotion, but neither explains why nor ever quite gets over it:

> I am writing this & the other man, who is an artist, is trying to draw me. The taproom is very noisy, but here there is only a fire & 3 billiard balls on a table & us. He is the man through whom I fell into disgrace. I haven't outlived it yet.

When he refers to old acquaintances, they inhabit another world. No wonder Frost and New England came to seem as remote as heaven, when daily life was this wading nightmare: "Nobody recognizes me now. Sturge Moore, E. Marsh, & R.C. Trevelyan stood a yard off & I didn't trouble to awake them to stupid recognition."

For those of us who grew up believing war pictures on the news and do not really believe them anymore, Thomas stands shaking his head at the very birth of the process: "The cinematograph pictures of the 'Somme Battle' tell you exactly nothing. I went to see them last night. You can learn far more from two or three soldiers talking about women." Thomas once replied to the question of what he thought he would be fighting for by lifting up some English soil and muttering, "For this," but an aside to Frost straightens the picture: "My father is so rampant in his cheery patriotism that I become pro German every evening." Elsewhere, he writes: "My country had virtually deserted me before I decided

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not to desert it." But his faith in ordinary talk as a dwelling place of truth bears some delightful fruit:

> Shall I copy out the speech our captain made to the men who were leaving us to go to be finished at the cadet school? ... "Take care to mind your Ps & Qs, & do everything top-hole." He is a huge kind man with no memory, very fond of the country. The other day in the fields he said "Company, attention! Oh, look at that rabbit."

WHAT WAS LOST TO ENGlish poetry when Edward Thomas died has never really been found again. It is an authenticity of the present moment expressed at the level of breath. One can hear it in Frost, of course, but the Thomas strain is different: its sadness seldom resolves; rarely does he elbow his way like Frost to some provisional platform of wisdom. While in his review Thomas described "The Death of the Hired Man" and "Home Burial" as "masterpieces of deep and mysterious tenderness," in private to Frost he questioned the last lines of both, as if he wasn't entirely comfortable with conclusion of any kind. His is a poetry concerned with capturing present feeling, while contemplating around and beyond it a desolation of time and space that is impossible to know.

Now, this is hardly a unique attitude for a poet of the twentieth century—or earlier, if one knows Marvell—but Thomas, in contrast to any of the important poets of that era, positions himself much closer to the wind, to the thought so fresh it opens the mouth and registers as gasp or sigh. In this sense it is a walking poetry as against a sedentary one, a work of the breath as against the brain.

One hallmark of the finest poetry is that no other verse can diminish it, but a peculiar effect of reading deeply in certain enduring work is that for a while one is drawn into thinking that this is the only way poetry should be written. Nothing in Edward Thomas can chip away at the achievements of Auden or Eliot or Yeats, and yet, in the moments one is alongside Thomas, walking as he walks, seeing as he sees, Auden can seem brisk and sealed and prescriptive, Eliot a caster of spells to serve a narrow faith, Yeats a grand politician shoehorning life into his systems. These perceptions may not even make up one-hundredth of one's opinion of these poets (and they in their turn will reduce all others), but Thomas can just for a moment occasion them, perhaps because his own way of seeing has all but disappeared from poetry.

THE BULGING CELL OF VERSE in English swelled and divided spectacularly in the early twentieth century—it can more or less be traced to the footsteps of Frost and Pound warily converging and then crossly parting on the streets of Bloomsbury; and while Thomas thought Frost "revolutionary" in 1914, by 1922 there were rather more emphatic claims on that word. What's striking is how little has essentially changed in ninety years. You pass left or right around a stone marked "Stein" and just keep walking till everyone you meet agrees with you. Creative-writing departments are one thing or the other. Two anthologies of new British poetry recently published in the United States share hardly a single poet, so mutually exclusive are their conceptions of value. "New Formalists" and "L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E" poets cluster in their own departments, bristling with satisfaction, indifferent to the indifference of the world outside. And while these two airless extremes are only the edges of the spectrum, most poets are tugged one way or the other, as if the grotesque civil war in America's mind might spread through every field of action. Those who operate between the poles favor a loose prosaic style, having thrown out technique along with form, or an elliptical one, standing some way off from the poem, winking at it, coaxing the reader to unpick it like a knot, to grant it a coherence the author withheld.

But then young writers enter the arena—that is to say, the academy—bearing certain assumptions with which, frankly, their more literary grandmothers would have agreed. That poetry is for the few. That poems must be clever. That poems must surprise. That poems must be difficult. Or rather, that they can speak truthfully only if they are difficult, because life on earth—suddenly—is difficult. That the new things of this world are alienating, still. That the poet, more alert and psychologically complex than most readers, can express his or her complexity only by acts of evasion or concealment, calling, as Auden said, "The sun the sun, his mind Puzzle." That the chief criterion of significance in a poem lies in what volume and with what further complexity it might profitably be studied.

These assumptions are not all wrong, or always wrong, but they are assumptions. They are of their time. They are of their time like the ubiquity of the word "text," which purports to allow a neutral space between authorial intent and critical perception while in fact reducing the once-admired author to a hapless conveyor of signs and flattering the once-humble reader into thinking that there is no mystery beyond the tools of contemporary analysis.

IT IS HARD TO SEE THOSE TOOLS lingering long over Edward Thomas, who locates mystery not in some deftly broken contract between poet and reader, but in the soundless breathing space between his words and the world, and who had a habitual doubt about anything that he felt was "made up," "thought out," "done too much on purpose." Of his deceased contemporary Rupert Brooke, he wrote to Frost: "He was a rhetorician, dressing things up better than they needed. And I suspect he knew too well both what he was after & what he achieves. I think perhaps a man ought to be capable of always being surprised on being confronted with what he really is." The world changes in Thomas, clouds go by, light alters. These things shift the vowels, nudge the syntax. Words register changes in both inner and outer weather. There is little hope of conclusion and less of revelation, because there is no wisdom partly concealed or teased out by the poet for reasons of aesthetic structure. Still, because the verse sits true on the breath, it sits true there now, and try as it might it cannot get old.

> ... "My past and the past of the world
> were in the wind.
> Now you will say that though you
> understand
> And feel for me, and so on, you
> yourself
> Would find it different. You are all
> like that
> If once you stand here free from
> wind and mist:
> I might as well be talking to wind
> and mist.
> You would believe the house-agent's
> young man
> Who gives no heed to anything I say.
> Good-morning. But one word. I want
> to admit

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That I would try the house once more,
if I could;
As I should like to try being young
again."

What Thomas thought was true he found in Frost, and his awestruck words on *North of Boston*, in a review written before he had himself attempted verse, form a touchstone and template for what—so very briefly—he would achieve: "With a confidence like genius, [Frost] has trusted his conviction that a man will not easily write better than he speaks when some matter has touched him deeply, and he has turned it over until he has no doubt what it means to him, when he has no purpose to serve beyond expressing it, when he has no audience to be bullied or flattered, when he is free, and speech takes one form and no other."

THE POEM "OLD MAN" BEGINS thus:

Old Man, or Lad's-love,—
in the name there's
nothing
To one that knows not Lad's-love,
or Old Man,
The hoar-green feathery herb,
almost a tree,
Growing with rosemary and lavender.
Even to one that knows it well,
the names
Half decorate, half perplex the thing
it is:
At least, what that is clings not to
the names
In spite of time. And yet I like the
names....

Everything sounds on the breath. A poet who knows how to include it in the utterance—who knows, in fact, nothing else—can achieve astonishing levels of compression. The first two lines above manage to hold up two phrases, drain them within a line, estrange them further within the second, while incidentally running the span of existence backward ("Old Man," "Lad's-love," "name," "nothing") and then forth again to the brink of extinction, otherwise known as the end of the line. As if this were not enough, the words then sprout leaves before our eyes. The lines meanwhile carry the precise weight of the thought. First, we hear the press of the need for it to sit somehow, however awkwardly, in the English language: "The hoar-green feathery herb, almost a tree"; then that thought relaxing into prior knowledge, "Growing with rosemary and lavender," deftly muting the rhyme that the two nouns would have offered if switched, a rhyme that would have sailed the poem into the serenity of the pre-Raphaelites. But rosemary is noticed first, and so rosemary is noted first. After the silence of visual contemplation, we hear the thought begun again, more intent on completion: "Even to one that knows it well, the names/Half decorate, half perplex," where the line break and the consonantal knot between "half" and "perplex" slow the line so that one may hear the words being sought and chosen. The effort of finding them drains from what follows, reducing the language to this numb staccato: "the thing it is:/At least, what that is clings not to the names."

Discussion of prosody is redundant here; there are no Greek terms or slash marks adequate for lines this subtle, this felt. It is the sound of intaken oxygen molding and being molded by thought. It is *analog*, unreadable to a critical culture so sure that art can be digitalized. You can hear it in the mutterings of any man given by his creator both authentic breath and imagined bounds, limits to exhalation, stops to the mind: "To die, to sleep—/No more—and by a sleep to say we end/The heartache, and the thousand natural shocks/That flesh is heir to! 'Tis a consummation/Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep—/To sleep—perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub...." No wonder verse has faded from the stage; no wonder poetry workshops gaze at drama departments across miles of campus, when poets seem not to realize that the physical accuracy of utterance to which a playwright must hold his characters can be applied to poems, by a poet.

SPECULATIONS ON WHAT BROUGHT Thomas to this plane of sensitivity so abruptly and intensely—the certainty that he was about to die? the feeling that his world had vanished forever?—are just new ways to go gray. But perhaps a clue lies in the unusual origin of his poetic voice. In so many cases he made verse from only his existing prose, faithful to the orders of perception, alert to the alternating of clarity and confusion, knowledge and surprise: "As I hold the spring to my nose and slowly withdraw it, I think of nothing, I see, I hear nothing, yet I seem too to be listening, lying in wait for whatever it is I ought to remember but never do. No garden comes back to me, no hedge or path...."

To this he added only one thing, that which he described in Frost as "the good old English medium of blank verse." Thomas's blank verse is hardly a strict pentameter, the kind of line that by the late Victorians had congealed into sweetness and was over-ripe for scorn; even the best of that lies under dust. It is a vessel: it bears the man through time. Blank verse organizes thought no more nor less forcefully than breath, which is why—if what is remembered is anything to go by, and it is really all there is to go by—it tends to last. It is the most accurate metaphor English has ever found for the experiencing of the moment, for combining the wave-fall of breath with the glowing or flashing of new light, while sounding below it all, for as long as it lasts, the consolation of sameness.

I have mislaid the key. I sniff the
spray
And think of nothing; I see and
I hear nothing;
Yet seem, too, to be listening,
lying in wait
For what I should, yet never can,
remember:
No garden appears, no path,
no hoar-green bush
Of Lad's-love, or Old Man,
no child beside,
Neither father nor mother,
nor any playmate;
Only an avenue, dark, nameless,
without end.

If the poetry of English still numbers among its projects a need to express the human moment, using the words that float nearest in the air, and moving at the pace at which that moment passes, then the lines of this forlorn soldier-poet are waiting. Eighty-seven years have not dated them one second. ■

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NEW YORK DIARIST

The Aviator

LIKE MANY PEOPLE, I'M AMBIVALENT about flying. Since September 11, that ambivalence is as much about the way I act when I fly as it is about flying itself.

I SPENT MANY YEARS NOT THINKING about flying one way or the other. I'd get on a plane, open my book, and often be glad for the enforced solitude. Whether in school; during years of early travel in Europe and Asia; or on my first jobs in magazine publishing, when event-planning took me around the United States, flying was a welcome break from the routine. People on the flight, studied furtively, were interesting or horrifying or attractive; time took on its own dimension, meted out by the arrival of the drinks cart, meal, movie, or occasional conversation with a seatmate; and retrieving bags (I always checked), watching the grinding carousel with my fellow passengers, was like waiting in a fluorescent-lit purgatory to reenter the world.

FLYING HAD SOME ADVENTURE, TOO, though it only seemed to arrive on the rare occasions I was in first class. I met the man I almost married there, thanks to a mechanical problem in Denver that kept us at the gate for an hour, cocktails gratis. By the time the plane made its descent into New York, there was a full moon over the city, the entire front cabin seemed to be smiling on our future, and it felt as if we landed on a cloud. That, and the guy resembled my father in most respects. (I ended up marrying the woman I should have been watching for on all those long flights.)

I DEVELOPED A FEAR OF FLYING ONE day in my late twenties on a hopper flight from Aspen. Looking up from my book and down on all the gorgeous, snow-covered, craggy mountains, I suddenly thought, "Holy shit! If this plane's engines were to shut off, we'd crash right into those mountains!" Burned beyond recognition, less pain on impact than during the fright of descent. I imagined it countless times over the next few years as I continued to fly. I discovered a variation of this morbid fantasy in the late '80s on an overnight flight from Karachi to Amsterdam. I was in the little room up those curly stairs on a 747. My seatmate, a military-helicopter salesman from Bath, England, pointed out the oil derricks in the distant Gulf. "And what are those flashes of light over there?" I asked, pointing to sharp, silent light bursts to the right of the derricks on the horizon. "Ah!" he said. "They're shelling. Nothing to worry about." He went back to his meal. Later, as the clouds around us lighted up with refracted missile glare, I woke him up to get the same answer. "We're over the Iran-Iraq border," he said. "They do this every night. They really don't care about us." I imagined a heat-seeking missile going up the plane's tail, drank gin and tonics, and tried to control my sense of fatalism until dawn broke, far away in KLM land.

THE PREOCCUPYING FEAR FADED, BUT the dread in the back of my mind never did. After September 11, there was a new question: "Does anyone look dangerous on this flight?" I'd ask myself while mediating between my heart and head. "Do they have the full-beard, serious, ethnic look?" I would try to see if they seemed happy, scolding myself as I did. Recently, I took a flight to Florida for a magazine conference. My seat was up by the cockpit—Delta Song has no class system (and no food or pillows, though you can buy the former)—and opposite me sat a neatly dressed, middle-aged man seemingly of Arab descent. He had a full beard that was, it seemed to me, trimmed in a way that you'd trim if you didn't want to seem too radical. He scowled into his book—English, I saw. That was something. His cell phone rang, and he answered it with a terse, accented "Yes." Not a question, more like a command—or like a *commander* might answer his phone. He grunted a couple of times. Then he said, "Good luck," but not with any feeling. My heart lurched. The internal dialogue started up: He can't storm the cockpit, his bomb wouldn't make it into the plane—wait, we don't screen luggage: it could! Right?—but it's highly unlikely. I watched him carefully. Did he want to die? He seemed too mature, but people with their causes—you just never know. I felt ashamed of myself. And scared.

I WENT TO THE FLIGHT ATTENDANT. "I'm being an idiot," I said, "but I just have to say out loud that this guy opposite me makes me nervous. He keeps speaking into his cell phone in a sort of suspicious way, I don't know—he just said, 'Good luck.' " "OK," the attendant said, "we'll keep an eye on him." I went back to my seat. If he has a bomb in the hold, what good will it do to keep an eye on him? And then I thought: Calm down, you really are being an idiot. I tried to relax. But then the plane backed out of the gate, the man put down his English language book and pulled a Koran from his suit pocket. He leaned forward and read closely, his lips moving and body swaying. I caught the flight attendant's eye and tilted my head meaningfully toward the man. He's reading the Koran! She walked by and kept walking. Clearly, they weren't going to stop the plane.

I DIDN'T KNOW ANY OTHER WAY TO control my anxiety, so I leaned across the aisle and touched the gentleman on the arm. He started and stared at me. "Excuse me," I said, "is that the Koran you're reading?" He smiled. "Yes." "The writing is very beautiful," I said—I've always thought so—"I don't see it very often." "It is Ramadan," he said. He had a radiant smile, not of one seeking converts, but just a guy with great teeth, happy to talk about his religion. "We must pray every day." I could feel my breathing slow. "It's an important time for us to understand each other's religions," I said. He said, "Yes," and, if he knew it was my ploy to calm down, he didn't let on. The man's community was building a new mosque in Fort Lauderdale, where he teaches. "Religion?" I asked, and again he smiled, kindly, not as I would have, the way an idiot should be smiled at, with just the right amount of condescension to put her down where she belongs. "No, oceanography." His wife wears the veil. He has four daughters. I thanked him for obliging me, and he went back to praying. We wished each other well after landing and went back to our lives on the ground. It could be just my imagination, but maybe I'm starting to get over myself.

STEPHANIE SANDBERG

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Major foreign policy differences, especially regarding the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, have contributed to the deterioration of relationships between the United States and our traditional allies in Western Europe. There can be no doubt that some European leaders stonewalled the Bush administration on Iraq in order to provide lateral support to the Kerry campaign. With the Bush victory, however, Europe may choose the wiser path of mending fences with Washington.

Yet **an anti-American spirit has been unleashed in the European street, and it will be difficult to tame, not only because of foreign policy but also because of economics**. Poor economic performance in Europe feeds a politics of resentment, and the scapegoat has been the United States.

In 2000, the European Union (EU) launched the ambitious Lisbon process, a reform agenda enabling the EU to become "the most competitive and dynamic, knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth, creating more and better jobs and greater social cohesion" by the year 2010. Lisbon was also a declaration of competition with the United States for global economic primacy. A high-level commission headed by former Dutch prime minister Wim Koks recently determined, however, that European economic performance was deeply disappointing. The gap with the United States has been growing larger, and the Lisbon goals are further away than ever.

Third-quarter growth in the United States was reported at 3.7 percent, a figure eliciting disappointment because it was lower than some new experts compare this, however, with the euro economies, where growth in 2004 may only reach 1.8 percent and is predicted to climb at most to a breathtaking 1.9 percent in 2005. Why is growth so slow? The Koks report blames politicians for failing to carry out necessary reforms.

The inability to reform—in the labor market, in impediments to trade, and in the social welfare network—is precisely where the problem of anti-Americanism enters. Efforts to deregulate and liberalize the economy are easily tagged with negative labels: French pundits denounce them as "Anglo-Saxon"; German politicians shun them as the feared "American conditions." **Although Europe urgently needs structural reform, it hides behind the smoke screen of anti-Americanism**, which is really anticapitalism. Rejecting America because of capitalism, however, means repressing the European tradition of free market thinkers from Adam Smith to Friedrich von Hayek.

Many Europeans believe that their slow economy is the price they must pay for their elaborate welfare state. This, however, turns out to be an illusion. A recent study by the Austrian Labor Council shows that the portion of GDP devoted to the social safety net is greater in the United States than it is in Europe; although European states generously pay out more in welfare benefits, they take much more back through higher tax rates.

At the end of the day, anti-Americanism as a block to economic reform inhibits European prosperity. The more Europeans demonstrate, the farther they fall behind. Good-bye to Lisbon.

—Russell A. Berman

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